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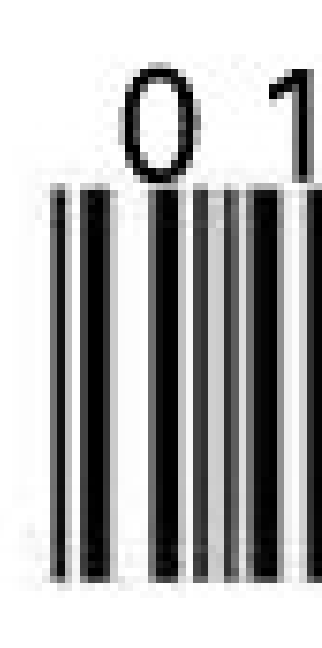
SKIN DEEP

JANUARY '11
ISSUE 193 • £3.95**FREE 2011
CALENDAR****INTERVIEWS AND
ART WITH:****John Anderton
Eugene Rubuls
Electric Pick
Jose Lopez****BEST INTERNATIONAL
CONVENTION
COVERAGE FROM:****Barcelona
Devon
Las Vegas****FEATURING
THE SKIN DEEP
CALENDAR GIRL
WINNERS****EXCLUSIVE**

KAT VOND

WHAT KAT DID NEXT...**SPECIAL
FEATURE****THE ART AND HISTORY OF****RUSSIAN
PRISON TATTOOS**www.bigtattooplanet.com

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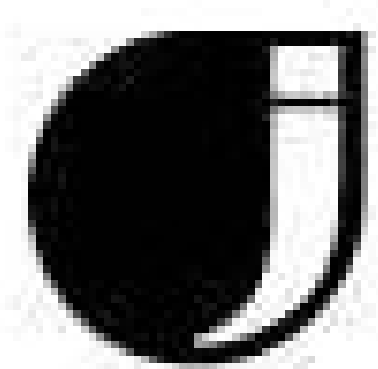
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THE NEEDLE HAS LANDED



THE GATES OF HELL

A few days ago, I was woken up to a call from the Jazz office saying that London Radio wanted me to call them to see if I would like to go on air and discuss an article that was published in the Daily Mail about how disgusting it was that more and more otherwise 'respectable' sports personalities seemed to be getting tattoos.

A few things to know up front here:

1. I am not at my best at 9 in the morning
2. I have only ever bought the Daily Mail once in my life and that was when they gave the Prince album away with it. I don't recall reading it.
3. I don't know anything about sport other than MMA and wrestling - and for my money, tattoos come with the territory where they are concerned
4. What the hell is London Radio? Have Capital rebranded?

So I called up and was given the briefest of briefs - including "please don't swear" (which immediately meant that half my vocabulary was missing) - put on hold and before I had even pulled the blind up to see if the snow had arrived in this corner of the world, discovered I has an audience of 4 million people...

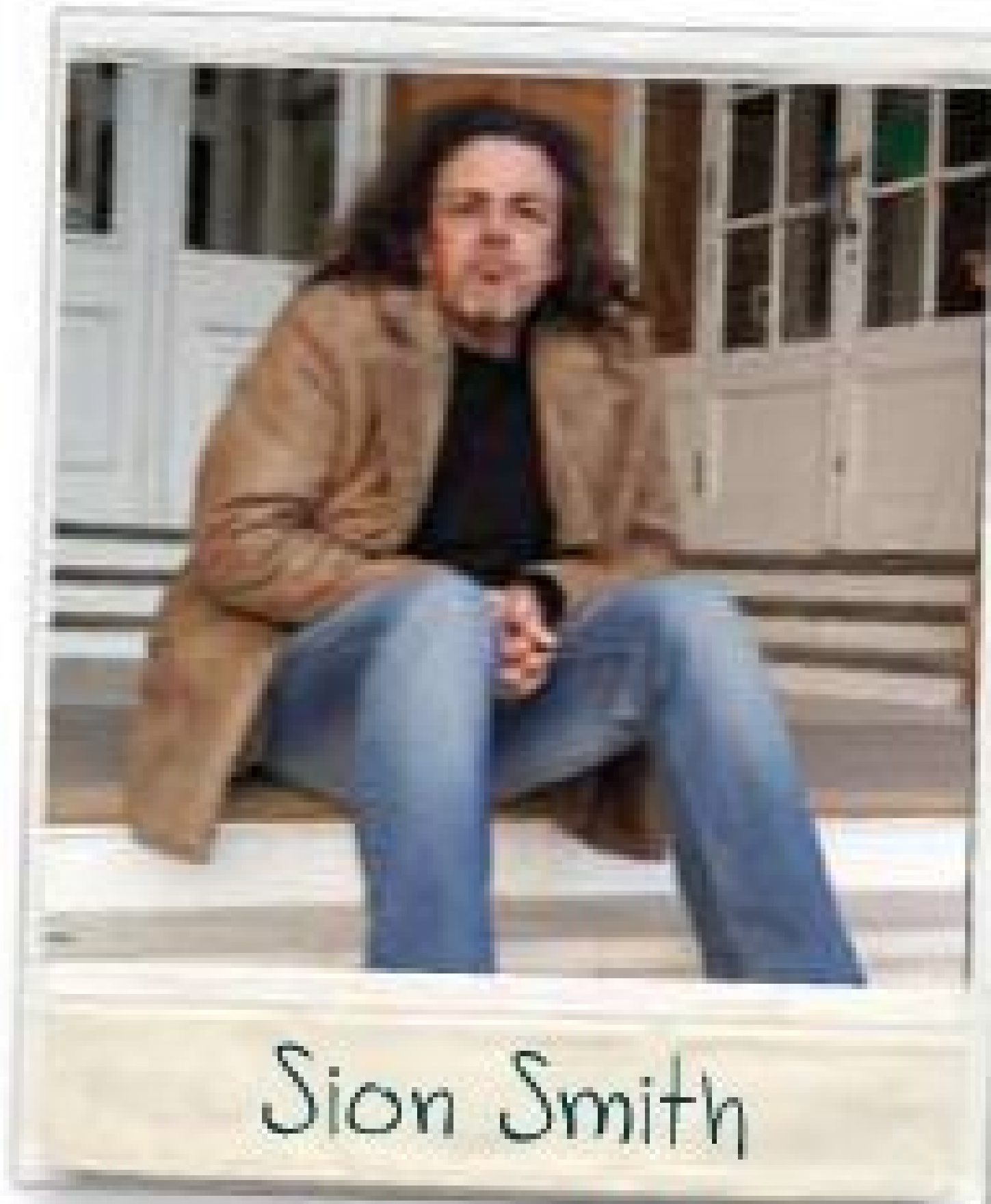
Gulp. Imagine if you will, waking up and being asked a lot of questions in quick succession by somebody who didn't really give a flying one about what you had to say anyway. I hope and think I fought the corner well - the guys at the office tuned in online and James even managed to email me such helpful comments as "Can you get Alvin Stardust played for me?"

In hindsight, I guess it must be quite hard to do a radio show absolutely live when you don't know if the people you called up five minutes ago will participate and your whole show is based on whatever happens to be in the newspapers that day, but somehow I expected

more in depth questions than "How many tattoos have you got and how much did they cost" but my favourite was something like, "Why is this happening to our sports people" 0 like it was some kind of disease that was sweeping the nation. I don't freaking know do I! Maybe they wanted to get one! Much like what clothes they decided to put on that morning and whether they would have tea or coffee with their breakfast, they probably decided for themselves much like the rest of us!

I did however refrain from saying what was on the tip of my tongue, but again in hindsight wish I had said: "Perhaps a better question to ask would be why our professional sports people can't play sports anymore. I certainly doubt it's because they got a tattoo and is probably more to do with the fact that when you get paid seventy gazillion pounds a minute for being average at best, what's the point in being hungry for success? When you've got that much money to play with, what else are you going to spend it on except tattoos, prostitutes, drink and cocaine? Was nobody in the sports world paying attention to what happened in rock n roll over the last fifty years?"

Maybe if he'd kept me on the air a little longer I would have slipped it in...



Sion Smith



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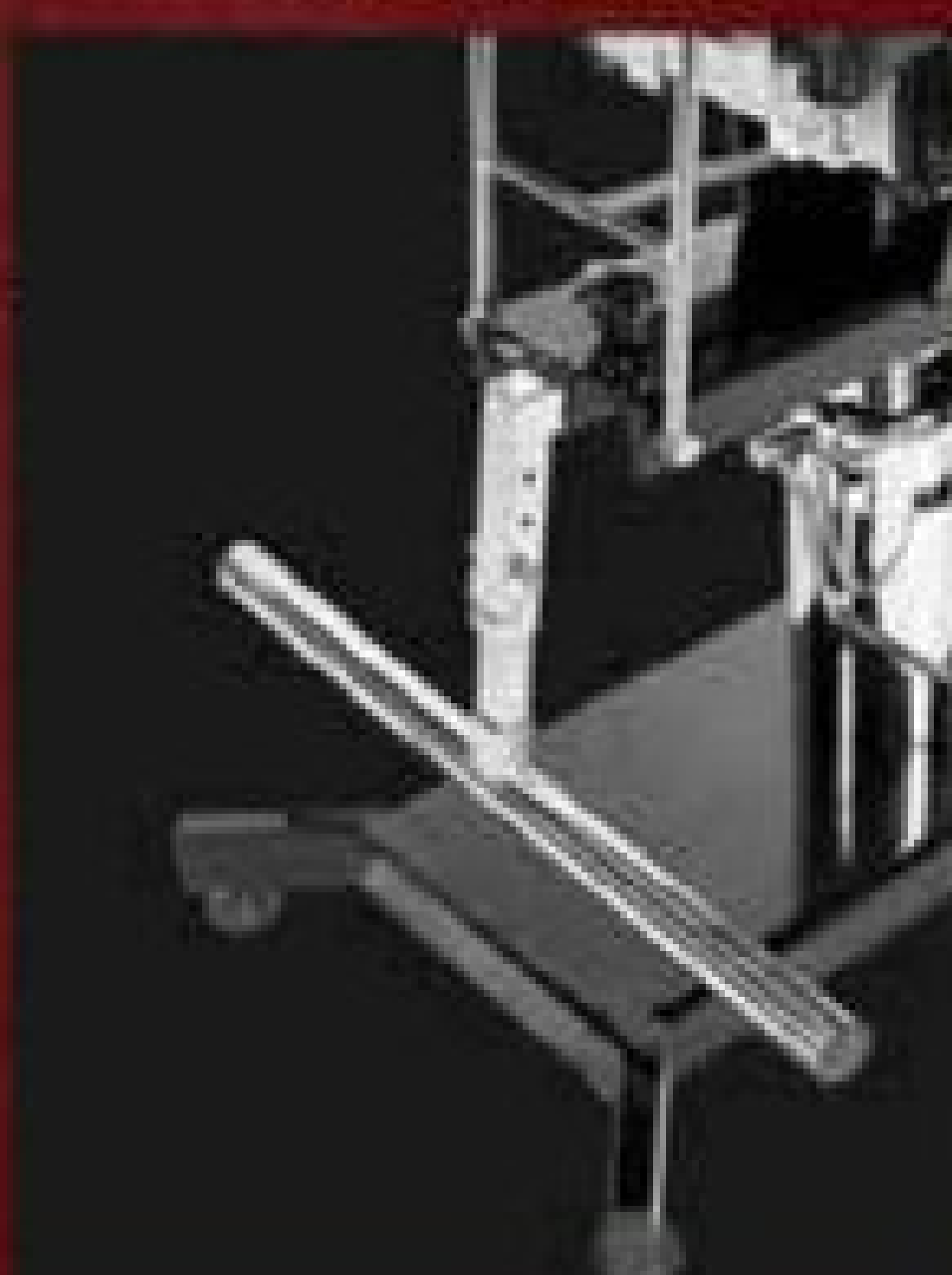
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FREE CALENDAR

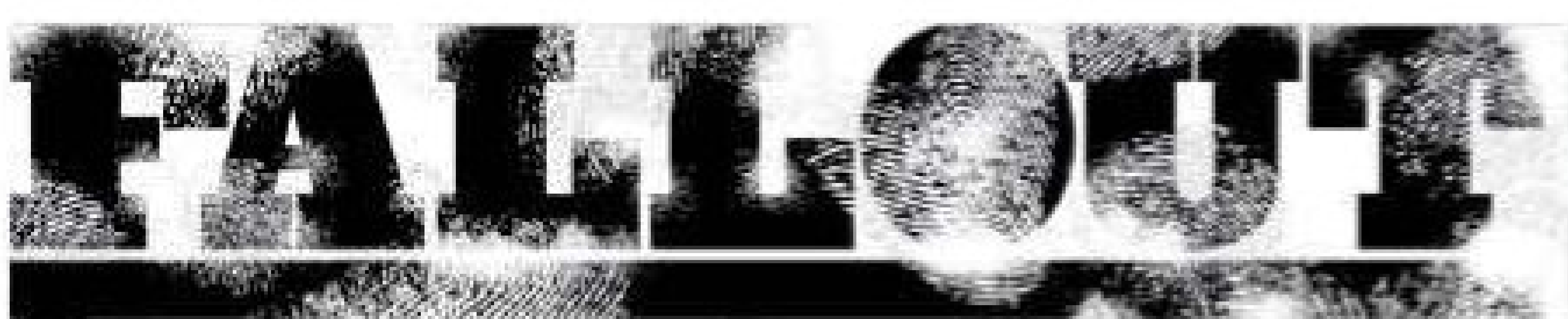
The winning entries from the Skin Deep Calendar Girls competition are revealed in all their glory!

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Seen an interesting clipping in the press? Got something that you'd like reviewed or featured? Got some spare chocolate or beer? Send them to: Skin Deep, The Old School, Higher Kinnerton, Chester CH4 9AJ OR EMAIL: editor@skindeep.co.uk



SKULLS FOR SALE

This major piece of graffiti art is currently up for sale on ebay. Worth every penny of the asking price too in our opinion. If you're interested in seriously bidding on the piece – maybe for a forthcoming event or for your studio – search for "Graffiti art huge skull backdrop bleach original art" and you'll find it sure enough.

MOVERS AND SHAKERS

Steve Herring and Karena Lima at 'I Hate Tattoos', welcome Akos, a 12 year veteran artist from Hungary. A top all-rounder, with a penchant for black and grey realism. His "time served" brings the combined working lives of these contemporary, innovative custom tattooists, to an impressive 40 years. Now, with 3 artists, opening times are 10am to 10pm Monday to Saturday (mainly appointments, but walk-ins accommodated where possible); Sundays, appointments only.

Northern Soul Tattoo have now moved over to their new studio at 265 East Prescot Road, Knotty Ash, Liverpool, L14 2DB. The new phone number is 0151 345 4285.

Apologies from issue 192 Last month in the City of Steel Convention show review we mistakenly credited the pic below – the real artist is Tim from Skill in Skin Studio. Those responsible have been confined to the sin bin until further notice.

GOLD TATTOOS? WHATEVER NEXT?

A new business in Dubai is offering temporary 24-carat gold tattoos as the ideal body adornment for weddings and other special occasions at a modest starting price of \$US50, an affordable option given rising gold prices.

Precious Skin has two outlets in Dubai - one at the luxury, sail-shaped Burj Al Arab hotel - which will design and apply body tattoos made of 99.9 percent gold or platinum to add a bit of glitz to your personal style.

"It's a revolution in the body art business, it's the first time we can use 24 carat gold and platinum on skin," said Arnaud Flambeau, managing director of Flambeau Luxury Trading and Precious Skin.

Originally a Japanese concept, Flambeau thought the idea would catch on in the Gulf, where many women have temporary henna tattoos applied for weddings and special occasions.

"We have had a lot of interest so far because it's a new idea and a new product that's between jewelry, makeup

and accessories and it's a lot easier to make the decision to get a gold tattoo than buy new jewelry," said Flambeau.

A thin film of gold or platinum is used to make the tattoo which is then applied to the skin and can last for up to a week, he said.

"More elaborate and larger designs can cost up to \$US5,500, and the idea really is just to have something that is very unique and new," Flambeau said.

"We plan to have a total of 25 branches in Dubai over the coming year and by January we will be in Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Bahrain."

Hmm. The world is going crazy



rites of passage

Start packing your suitcases (and prepare to sell body parts to cover the costs!) as over 150 tattoo artists from around the globe will feature in next years' Rites of Passage Festival.

A unique opportunity to discover both the ancient and urban culture of permanent body art, whilst celebrating various forms of visual art, music and sustainability.

The ROP crew are aiming to be as eco-friendly as possible with this event

showcasing everything from organic locally grown produce to eco-friendly tattoo supplies. 100% of the profits made from the festival will go towards buying agricultural land which will be replanted with native rainforests.

Visitors can look forward to world class acts such as Sean Hermanm, Paolo Acuna, Trevor McStay, our good friend Jo Harrison, Nick Baxter Rachie Brains and many others.

Discover, celebrate, sustain. Rites Of Passage Tattoo Convention and Arts Festival will be held in the Royal Exhibition Centre, Melbourne 28th to 30th January, 2011. Tickets through www.ritesofpassagefestival.com





CUPCAKES FOR HEROES

It's a good cause that's sweeping the nation – Cupcakes For Heroes that is. Colleen Moss (K2 Body Art in Richmond) and Rose Elizabeth (ABH Tattooing in Scunthorpe) first got together at Spalding Kustom Kulture Blast Off this year and began tattooing cupcakes at £20 a shot in aid of the Help For Heroes charity. So successful was the idea that they decided to create their own little part of it where they could generate the most cash and so came up with the Cupcake Club.

Assisted by a few great suppliers, the dynamic duo are now set for a run of epic proportions throughout 2011 appearing at the following conventions: Tattoo Jam, Portsmouth, Manchester, Coventry, Sheffield Hull, Ink & Iron no doubt with more to be added.

For any artists that wish to donate some of their time to the cause and help the girls out with tattooing the masses, guard duty is available for your workspace – you'll be in good company as this year Lal Hardy, Dan Gold and Traci Wilson have all offered their services.



FIFA GRACE UNDER PRESSURE

With footballers tattoos almost becoming a genre in their own right, FIFA has met the interest head on by unleashing it's own "Tales From The Tattoo Parlour" page on its official site.

Superficially covering the stories of the tattooed stars at the top end of the spectrum, it makes for interesting reading that's for sure. What would make it really work though is if they took the time to interview these guys in depth. You can get to the page via this unwieldy link: www.fifa.com/worldfootball/news/newsid=1341780.html



PRINGLE SWEATERS – INKED!

Douglas Gordon, the Turner Prize-winning Glasgow artist, has designed new clothing for Pringle of Scotland ... based on the many tattoos that cover his own body.

Gordon, who is now based in Berlin but keeps a house in Glasgow, has tattoos including a design saying "Maryhill", the area of the city where he grew up. Only 195 copies of the garments will be made. They will go on sale in late December or early January for the not inconsiderable price of £1095 for the jumper and £155 for the cardigan.

The design is a step away from the traditional Argyle pattern of the famous knitwear brand, which is now run from Hong Kong and London but still outsources some production to Scottish mills.

The tattoo effect was achieved using a new technique designed by Clare Waight Keller, the creative director of Pringle.

A mild acidic solution was used on a wool and polyester blend, described by the company as a "very unusual method" of exactly replicating Gordon's many examples of body art.

Gordon was approached to design the clothing for Pringle – his first foray into the fashion world – by Hans-Ulrich Obrist, curator of the Serpentine Gallery in London. It is collaborating with Pringle on a series of designs by contemporary artists to celebrate the label's 195th birthday.

Gordon said: "I got this call from Hans-Ulrich Obrist at the Serpentine Gallery, and he says, 'Douglas, you are Scottish, what do you think of these Pringle people?' And I said, 'What do you mean?' And he said, 'If they asked you to do something, what would you think of that?'"

"And I said, 'Listen, baby, I've done many things in my life, but if I don't get to work with them, I will never speak to you again.' Because I grew up with the Pringle pullover."

He added: "When I went for my fitting, I could see the look of horror on the designers' faces when they realised what I really looked like."

"My mum tells me to cover up my tattoos with Pringle. But rather than cover them up with Pringle, I will use Pringle to review myself."

Ms Waight Keller said: "It's been refreshing to work with people who are not watching the trends each season. My role has been to guide them towards the newest developments."

Gordon is best known for 24 Hour Psycho, commissioned in 1993, which slows down Hitchcock's classic film to last an entire day.



FOXY FOXY

By the time you're reading this, Tattoo Vixens will have been published and should be available in a bookstore near you!

Enough said – lest we be pegged as blatant self publicists! We'll let the Vixens do the talking for us...

CONVENTIONS

All details correct at time of going to press.

DECEMBER 4 – 5

TATTOO CHRISTMAS PARTY

The Hawthorne Leisure Centre
Pontypridd, Wales

www.thewelshshow.com

DECEMBER 10 – 12

SINGAPORE TATTOO ART & CULTURE SHOW

Formula 1 Pit Building, Singapore

www.sgtattooart.com

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2011

JANUARY 14 – 16

GATHERING OF THE TRIBES

Borneo Convention Centre, Kuching,
Sarawak, East Malaysia

www.tattooconventions.com.my

JANUARY 15 – 16

TATTOO FREEZE

International Centre, Telford

www.tattoofreeze.com

JANUARY 21 – 23

SURF 'N' INK INTERNATIONAL TATTOO CONVENTION

Gold Coast Convention Centre, Gold
Coast, Australia

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www.tattoosurfnink.com

JANUARY 28 – 30

rites of PASSAGE TATTOO CONVENTION & ARTS FESTIVAL

Royal Exhibition Centre, Melbourne,

Australia www.ritesofpassagefestival.com

JANUARY 29 – 30

BRIGHTON TATTOO CONVENTION

Brighton Racecourse, Brighton, East
Sussex, England

www.brightontattoo.com

FEBRUARY 19 – 20

LYON TATTOO CONVENTION

www.lyontattooconvention.com

Villeurbanne, France

MARCH 5 – 6

MANCHESTER TATTOO SHOW

Manchester Central Centre,
Manchester,

www.manchestertattooshow.co.uk

MARCH 12 – 13

LICHTENSTEIN TATTOO CONVENTION

Sporryhalle Vaduz, Lichtenstein

www.tattoo81.li

MARCH 25 – 27

KILLIBEGS TATTOO CONVENTION

Killibegs, Co. Donegal, Ireland

www.myspace.com/killibegstattoo

WALK THIS WAY...

Our tour of new studios opening around the UK took us to Milton Keynes this issue where we found **Double 7 Tattoo and Piercing** finishing

up their neat shop front paint job:

Owned and operated by the Australian Lars and Amanda Pearson, Lars has been tattooing for over 10 years and is well known for his Black and Grey work, musically inspired concepts and anything leaning towards the dark side.

Prior to becoming a tattoo artist, he was a photographer and has a number of Australian tattoo magazine covers as part of his portfolio. Lars has always had an interest in art and has managed to incorporate both passions now at Double 7 by offering a professional photo shoot for clients who wish to have their ink captured by a professional lens. Amanda is a qualified hair stylist and make-up artist and for the past few years has added body piercing to her list of passions and has begun training as a tattoo artist:

"We decided to open our own studio because we felt we could offer a much more personalised service to our clients both new and existing, without the restraints you can sometimes experience when working for someone else. Whatever the customers are looking for, we offer a warm, friendly environment while also giving consistently professional advice and service."



We're hoping to attend a few convention's in 2011 along with our good friends from Fool's Gold Tattoo Studio in Kent who regularly drop by for a bit of Art Fusion fun! Come and find us!"

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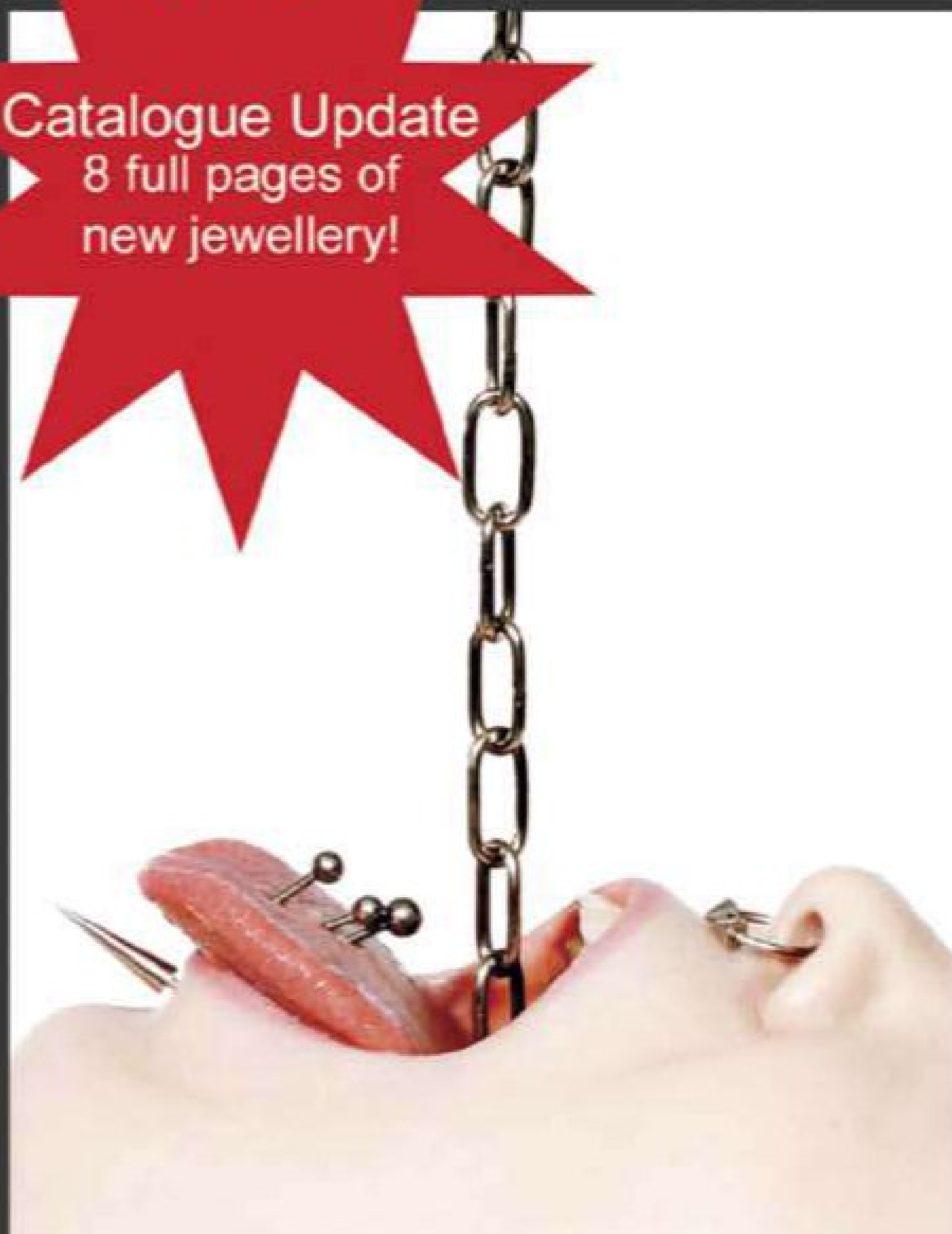
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CONVENTIONS

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COPENHAGEN INK FESTIVAL

TAP 1, Ny Carlsbergvej 91, 1738
Copenhagen, Denmark
www.inkfest.dk

APRIL 10

INK & IRON TATTOO CONVENTION

The Tower, Reservoir Road, Edgbaston,
Birmingham, B16 9EE, England
Email: info@inkandiron.co.uk

APRIL 16 – 17

TATTOO EXTRAVANZA

South Parade Pier, Portsmouth
www.tattooextravaganza.co.uk

APRIL 16 – 17

NORTH LAKES TATTOO CONVENTION

Shepherds Inn & Auctioneer,
Carlisle, Cumbria
www.northlakestattooshow.com

MAY 1 – 2

NEWPORT TATTOO CONVENTION

Neport City leisure centre
www.newporttattooconvention.co.uk
info@newporttattooconvention.co.uk
ticket office 01633 656757

MAY 13 – 15

LIVERPOOL TATTOO CONVENTION

The Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool, England
www.tattooconvention.co.uk

MAY 21 – 22

17TH ALCHEMY TATTOO EXPO

Salle Polyvalente, Conthey, Switzerland
Website: www.alchemy-tattoo-expo.ch

MAY 21 – 22

12TH INTERNATIONAL NEEDLE ART CONVENTION

Bress Sportcenter
Breda – The Netherlands

MAY 28 – 29

BOURNEMOUTH INK 2011

www.bournemouthtattooconvention.com
Bournemouth

JUNE 12

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JUNE 18 - 19

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SMALLMAN SYNDROME

One man's tragic obsession with the sillier side of tattooing...

Hello friends. Time for me - your friendly comedian Jim Smallman - to have my monthly rant and natter at your gorgeous faces.

I was on stage the other day introducing a friend of mine, as is often my duty as an MC at gigs. I went through my usual routine of whipping the crowd into a frenzy (it mainly involves making them do animal noises, if I'm honest) before politely bringing him onto the stage. Not bringing him off onto the stage, that's an entirely different kind of show. One of the first things he said upon grabbing the microphone concerned me, and it's a phrase that I've heard countless times before:

"There's Jim, with all his tattoos. He's still a lovely bloke though."

At first that seems like a nice comment between two friends, but then analyse it further. He has felt the need to stress that I'm a pretty OK kind of chap despite the fact that I'm fairly well inked up. As you sit here reading this over your cornflakes or sandwich or steak and kidney pie (I decided to cover all the possible mealtimes there) you may well be quite tattooed - after all, you are reading this esteemed publication. You might not be tattooed at all and looking for inspiration. One thing I can guarantee is that you won't bat an eyelid if you see someone who has spent time and money under the needle. If anything, when I see a pretty girl with at least one sleeve I tend to go beyond batting an eyelid and just become a full-blown stalker.

However, what my friend has revealed is that mainstream society still looks at us tattooed folk like we are freaks, dangerous mavericks on the fringes of society. And we're not - I'm certainly not, I know that. I'm a daft comedian who revels in having increasingly silly things etched into my skin. Even my most modified chums - people who have everything save the insides of their eyelids shaded in - are still complete sweeties who say please and thank you and donate money each week to the Dogs Trust.

I think what it will take for attitudes to change are a few conservative bastions of society getting some work done. To start with I nominate David Cameron gets his throat tattooed - if only so I can use him as my first ever "victim" for my



tattooing skills... Or Nick Clegg with "I Love David". Yes, sometimes I can do political humour. Not very often, I get distracted writing material about cheese, kittens and wool.

This month I've got another odd little tattoo, courtesy of my mate Shay at Kasbah in Leicester. I collect trainers, so he's inked me an awesome little one on my arm.

And don't forget I want to hear your stories of bizarre ink. Contact details are below - my favourite this month comes from the artist who lovingly created it - Cesar De Cesaro from Body Garden Tattoo in Birmingham. I think if we look beyond the skill of the design and the excellent colours, the best bit is the cheeky look on the horny cockroaches face. Brilliant. If you can top that, get in touch... more nonsense from me next month. Toodle pip!

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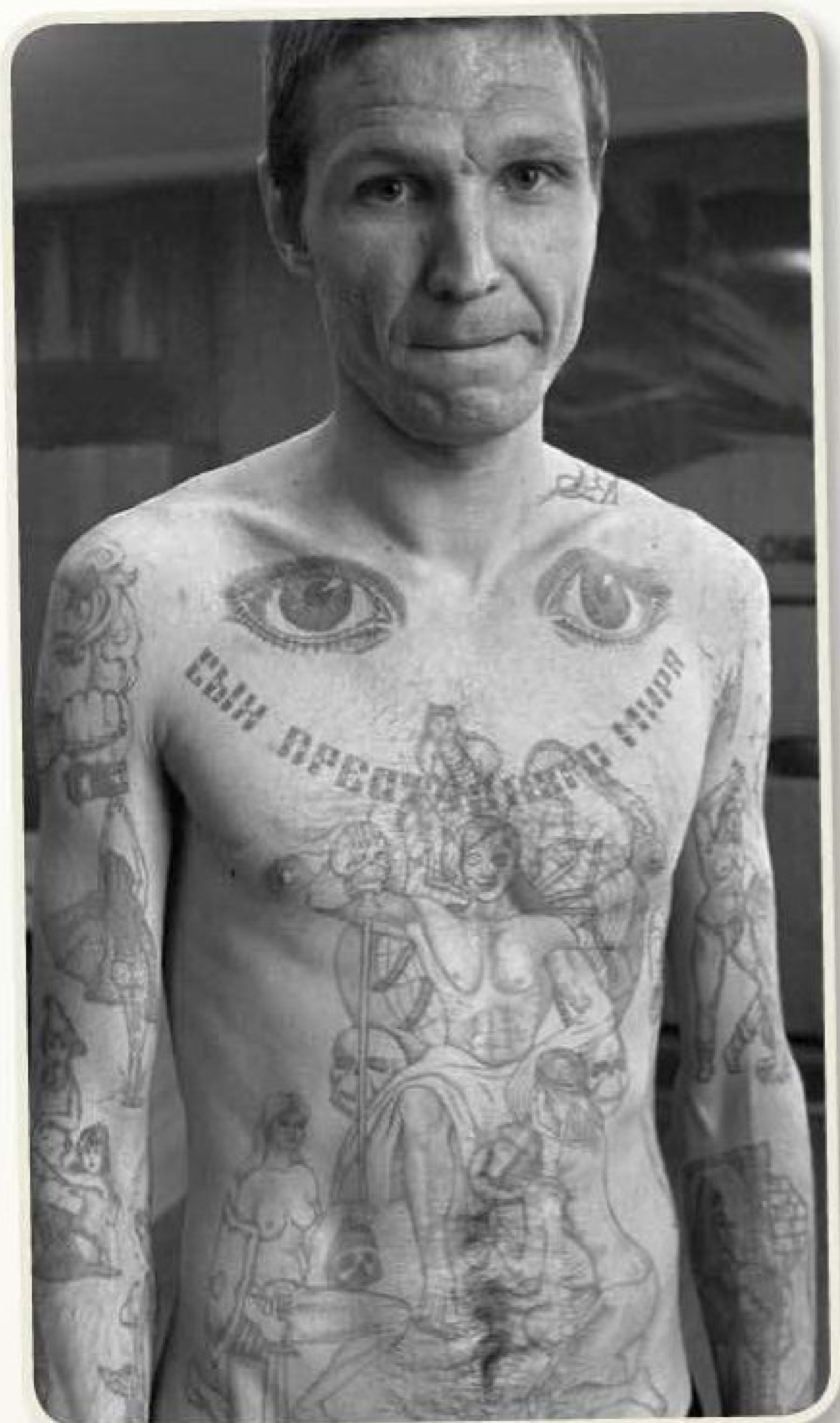
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 DRAWINGS: © FUEL / DANZIG BALDAEV
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FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE

Over the last six years, London based Fuel Publishing, have produced and published the best-selling Russian Tattoo Encyclopaedia series of books. The three publications, showcasing Russian criminal tattoos, have not only proved popular amongst tattoo enthusiasts but are so detailed and informative that film director, David Cronenberg, used them as reference for his 2007 movie Eastern Promise, starring Viggo Mortensen.



When the first volume of the Russian Criminal Tattoo Encyclopaedia, published in 2002, proved so successful, editors Damon Murray and Stephen Sorrell travelled to St. Petersburg to meet with Baldaev's widow. It was here they discovered that she kept the remainder of his drawings in bin bags and boxes secreted around her tiny flat. Keen to show the images to a wider audience, Murray and Sorrell bought all the remaining original tattoo drawings (around 600 sheets) and put together the second and third volumes in the series.

During November, Fuel held an exhibition in Spitalfields, to showcase 120 of the original ink drawings used in the series as well as 16 photographic prints by Sergei Vasiliev.

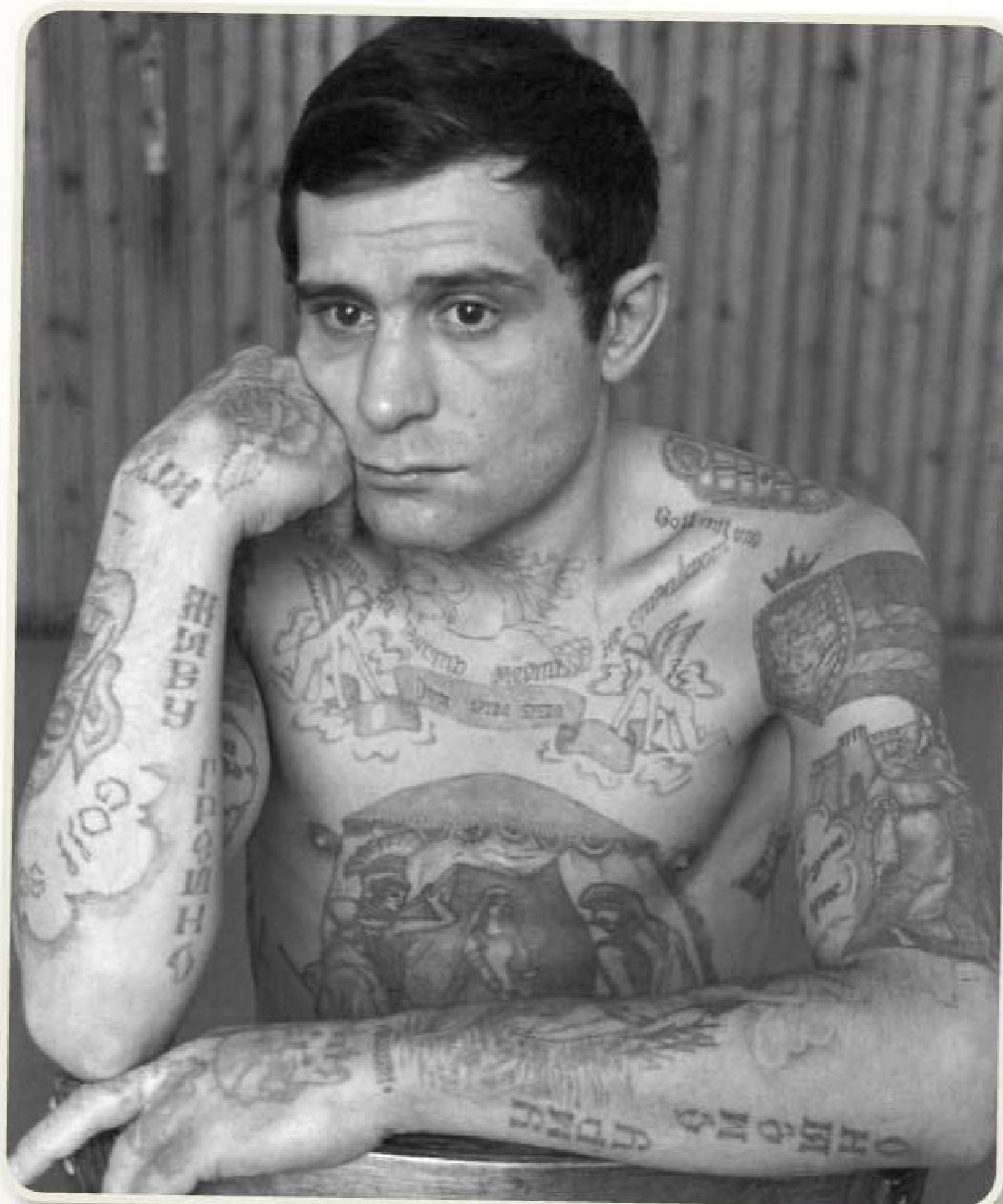
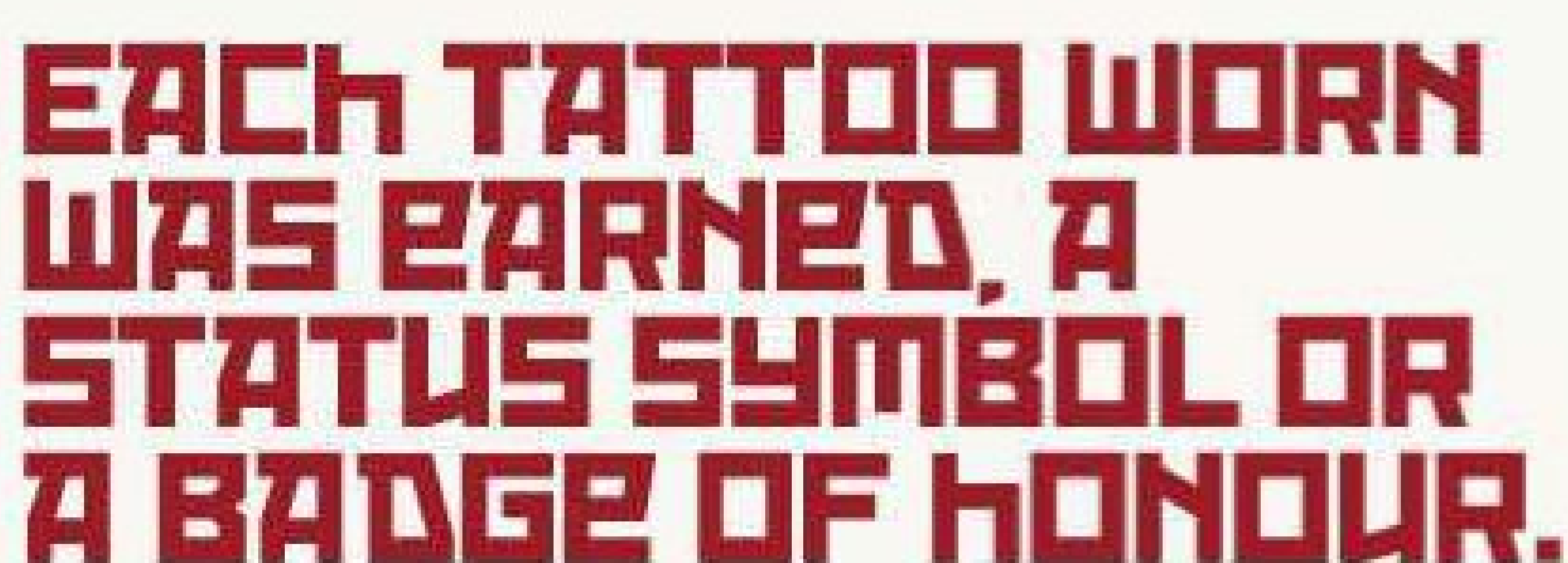
The sketches on show at the exhibition, were drawn by Danzig Baldaev over a thirty year period between 1946 and 1986, while he was a prison attendant at Russia's biggest prison in Leningrad - Kresty ('the Crosses'). It was during his time at Kresty that Baldaev was able to speak with other guards and prisoners to establish an accurate history of the inmates and their tattoos.

It was Baldaev's father, an ethnologist, who suggested that his son document

and study the tattoos that surrounded Baldaev on a daily basis. Following his advice, Baldaev would make quick sketches and brief notes about the tattoos while he was at work and then he would then take these roughs home to his flat, where he would work on them in great detail using pen and ink, often late into the night. This not only enabled him to make a unique study of the truly criminal portion of the prison population but his investigations were of value, as they were able to tell the authorities the history and status of a criminal from the images on his body. Here were some of Russia's most dangerous criminals and gang members, opening up a very private and select world. Unsurprisingly, Baldaev had the full support of the KGB.

Russian criminal tattoos are a complex system of symbols that represent everything you have ever done in your past, so that wearer can be read like a book; kind of like a rap sheet the police are fond of compiling. Not only are the symbols important but where they are located is important too. New gang members will often get a tattoo in the centre of their chest, a central and easily identifiable place, to show which gang or criminal family they were associated with.

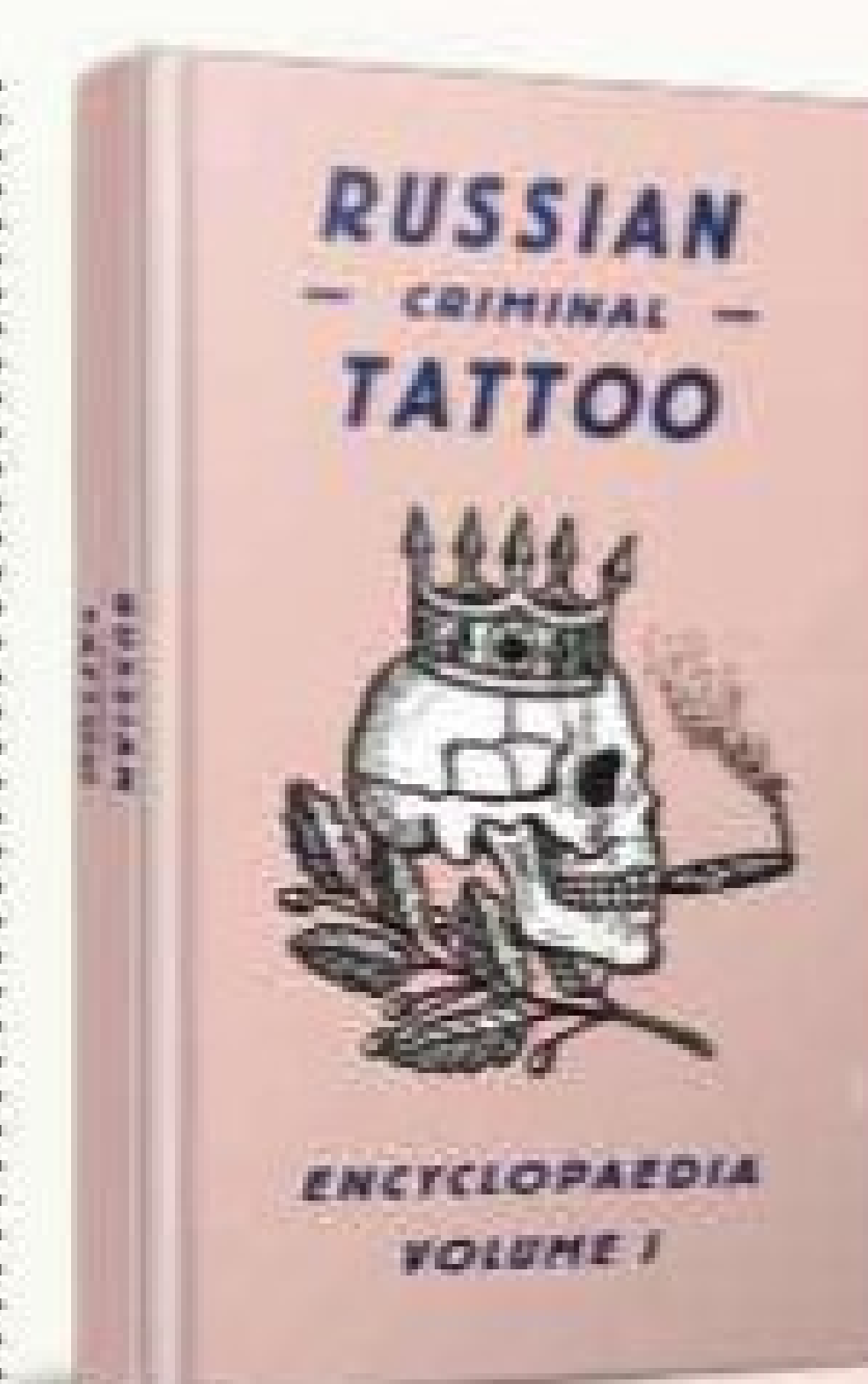
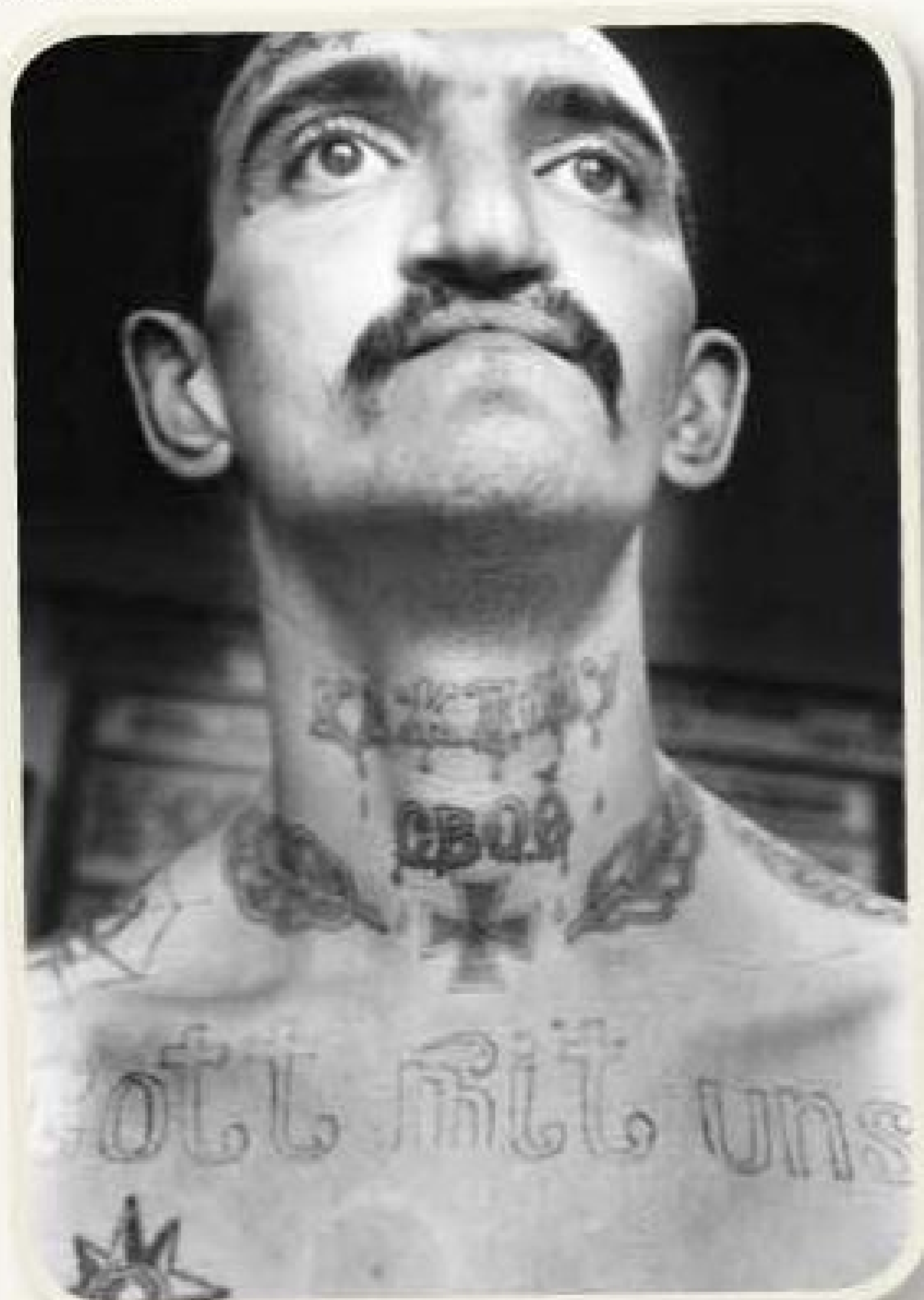
Each tattoo worn was earned, a status symbol or a badge of honour, for example, if an inmate had a tattoo of a cat and a dagger, one could safely assume that



Another way that the tattoos were used by the criminals, was as a way to kick back at the government and the establishment. Many of the tattoos are political, showing the hated leaders of Russia as demons or animals, while a supported

Alongside Baldaev's sketches at the exhibition, are photographs by Sergei Vasiliev, a fellow warden at the prison. Vasiliev's black-and-white photographs are an important document of Baldaev's illustrations.

originally taken to confirm the sketches' authenticity, but ultimately becoming works of importance in their own right. In his portraits, not only are the tattoos shown in the context that Baldaev saw them, but the hardship the inmates underwent is clearly seen, etched across their faces. Here, Vasiliev captures that "thousand yard stare" normally reserved for battle weary soldiers, or people who have seen more than they should have in their lives. ★



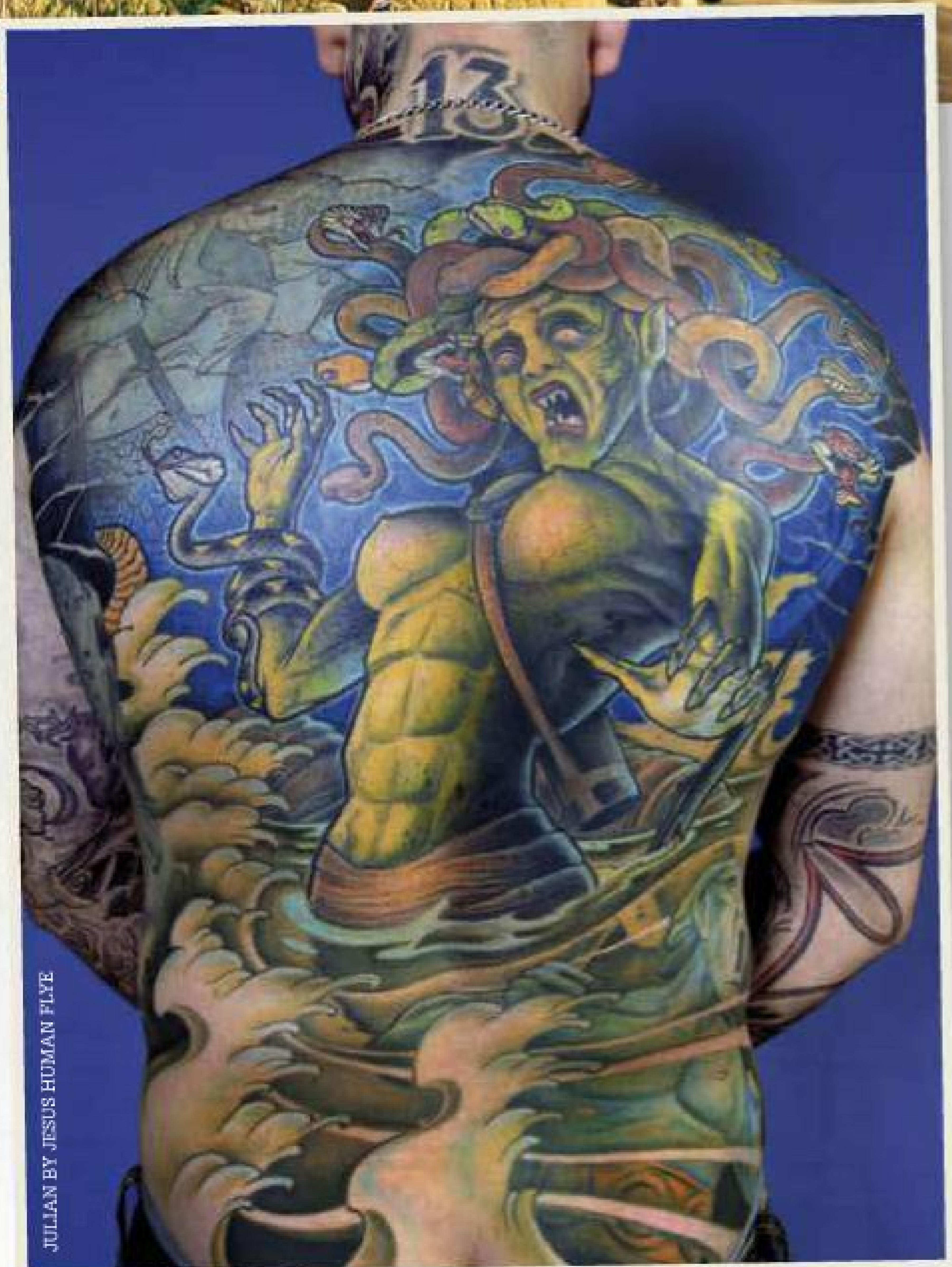
The Russian Criminal Tattoo Encyclopaedia Volumes I, II and III are available from Fuel's website www.fuel-design.com. And for those who are interested in the prisons and the conditions the inmates lived under, Danzig Baldaev's stories and illustrations of prison life are collected in the book *Drawings from the Gulag* also available from Fuel.

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY: DANIEL PISSONDES

BARCELONA TATTOO EXPO



One event that passionate tattoo people daren't miss is the Barcelona Tattoo Expo International organised by Mik Garreta assisted by Carlos and Barcelona's Pro Arts Tattoo Studio. This convention is one of the oldest in the country and certainly the most anticipated in Spain.



During the three day event (1st to 3rd October 2010) the expo brings body art professionals and aficionados from around the globe.

The atmosphere is such that here, you can find out everything you want to know about tattoos and piercing by openly talking to willing experts from all around the world. You also can see some pretty colourful characters - both attending the event and covering every visible body part.

This year was full of new concepts - such as the contest for New Tattoo Artists. There were more shows, more spectacles, more seminars from tattoo professionals, music, fashion and of course, tattoos in their purest form along with the not to be missed official election of Miss Tattoo in the competition to elect the cover-girl of a tattoo magazine.

The winner of the competition was adorned with exclusive clothes from

one of the best brands of swimwear and lingerie donated by the sponsor. She was then made-up to be photographed and published in a tattoo magazine and also won a €1000 prize.

From noon to the end of the day, every half hour, visitors were also able to visit fine spectacles of dance, concerts, tattoo contests and audiovisual conferences and seminars from the artists and the professionals where different subject were approached including a seminar on piercing, a seminar on regulation of machines and also one on new hygiene-sanitary courses approved by the department of health.

Over the three days, the expo introduced more than 134 different artists including: los Buenos Muchachos from Argentina, Daruma-Goya from Japan, Tatuajes de Reyes out of Mexico, Erevos Creations from Greece, East Tattoo from Taiwan, Brazilian Cew, Tattoo Tatauy who made the trip from Australia and Jess Yen of My Tattoo - USA and most European countries where also well represented. ☺



ALEX BY CHIENC EAST TATTOO (TAIWAN)



TONY BY STEPH H @ DIMITRI TATTOO SHOP



TONY BY STEPH H @ DIMITRI TATTOO SHOP



VIVIANA BY DARIO RIVEIRA RETRO TATTOO



MANUEL BY LOW RIDER (USA)



BARCELONA

Barcelona is the second largest city in Spain (after Madrid) and certainly has more than its fair share of museums for the art enthusiast. The National Museum of Art of Catalonia possesses a well-known collection of Romanesque art while the Barcelona Museum of Contemporary Art focuses on post-1945 Catalan and Spanish art. The Fundació Joan Miró, Picasso Museum and Fundació Antoni Tàpies hold important collections of these world-renowned artists. Good weather, good food and a strong tattooing culture as we've seen over recent issues - what are you waiting for?



VIVIANA BY DARIO RIVEIRA RETRO TATTOO



Many people regularly and consistently gathered around the stand of Jess Yen at My Tattoo from California - it was a real event to see him at a Spanish tattoo convention. Located in Southern California, he tattoos with both machine and traditional tebori hand style. All of the artists from My Tattoo are taught by older generations under the owner of the shop, Jess Yen (Horiyen) and it was great to see those artists giving the visitors the unique opportunity to watch closely how they worked. ☺



New Year Resolutions

1. Spend *more* time with the family.
2. Collect some *fresh* ink.
3. Eat *less* chocolate!

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AME BY TATDRAGO (PORTUGAL)

This year, Mik pulled out all the stops to ensure that this event was an exceptional international meeting of tattoo artists and also a multi-cultural melting pot by exposing the most recognised tattoo artists of the profession. During those three days, one could see three different competitions and every day was totally different with the competition on the last day reserved for the Best of Show.

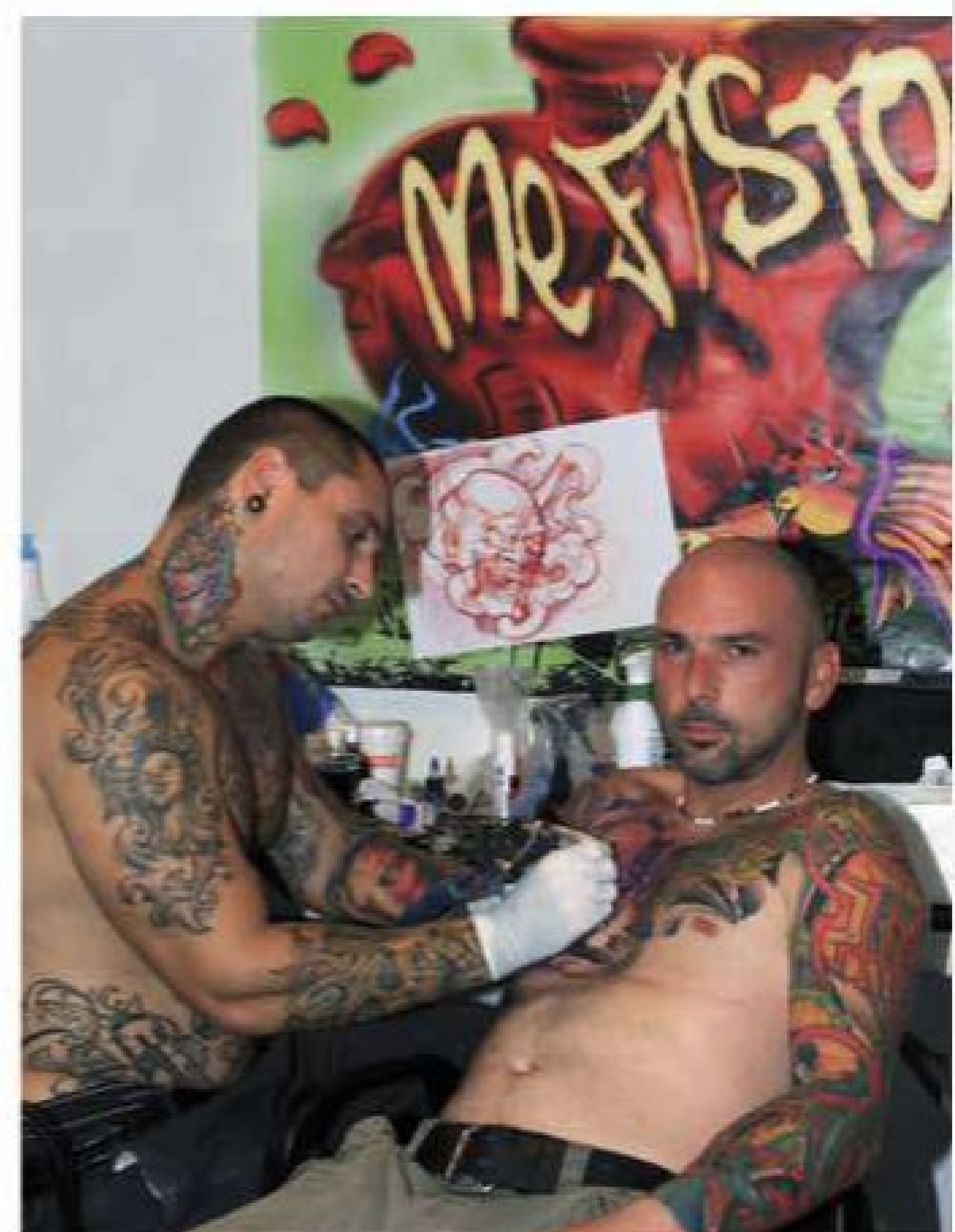
"Nowadays, the tattoo is not a fashion statement, it is an art which has its own culture, and attracts people of different social status. Thanks to these conventions, we hope to demonstrate that the artistic and cultural aspect of tattoos is much more diverse than it can appear," commented Miquel.

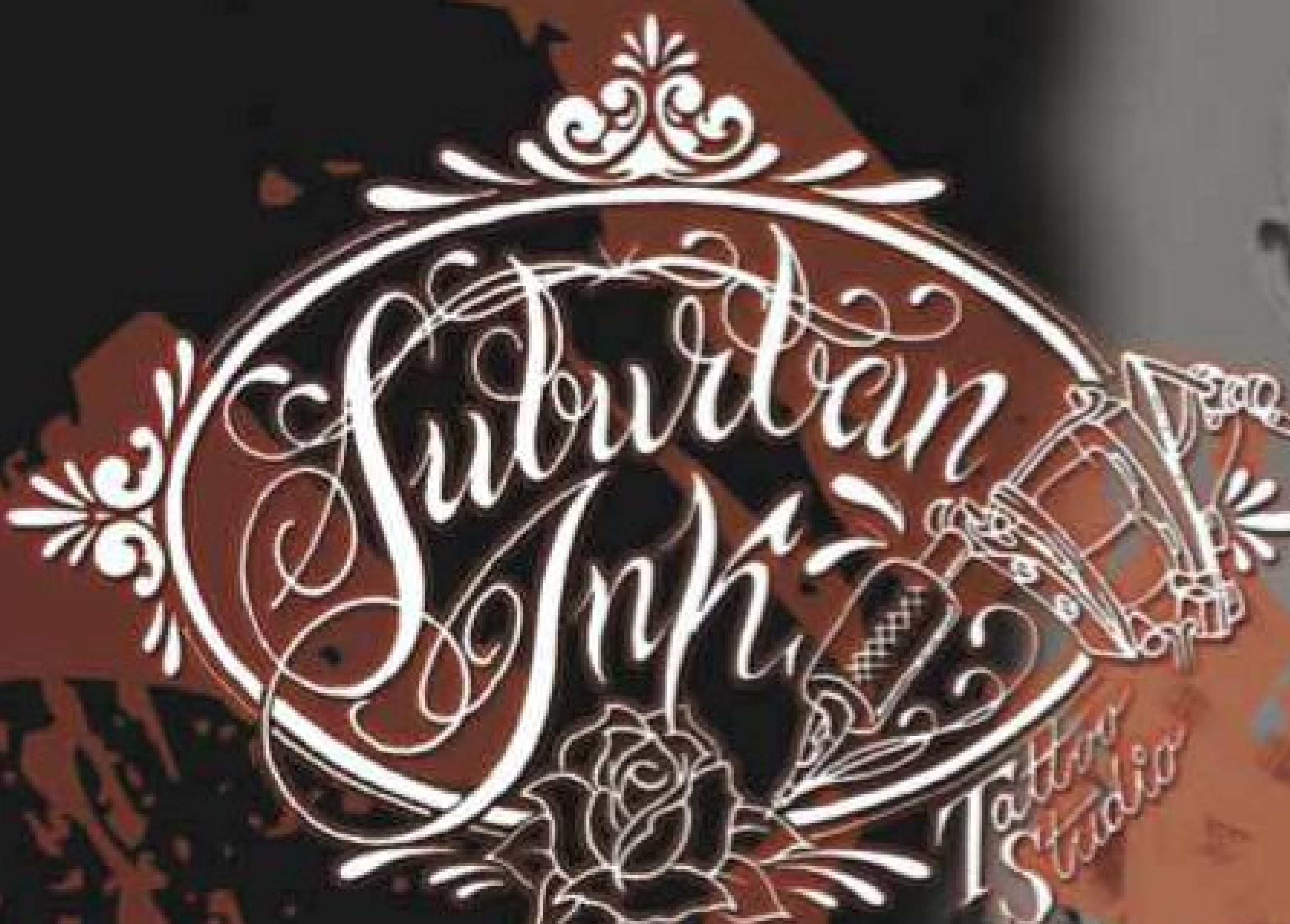
The convention ended on the Sunday evening, when it was estimated the total number of people through the doors was far in excess of 10,000. ★

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KATHERINE VON DRACHENBERG VS. KAT VON D

WHAT KAT DID NEXT...

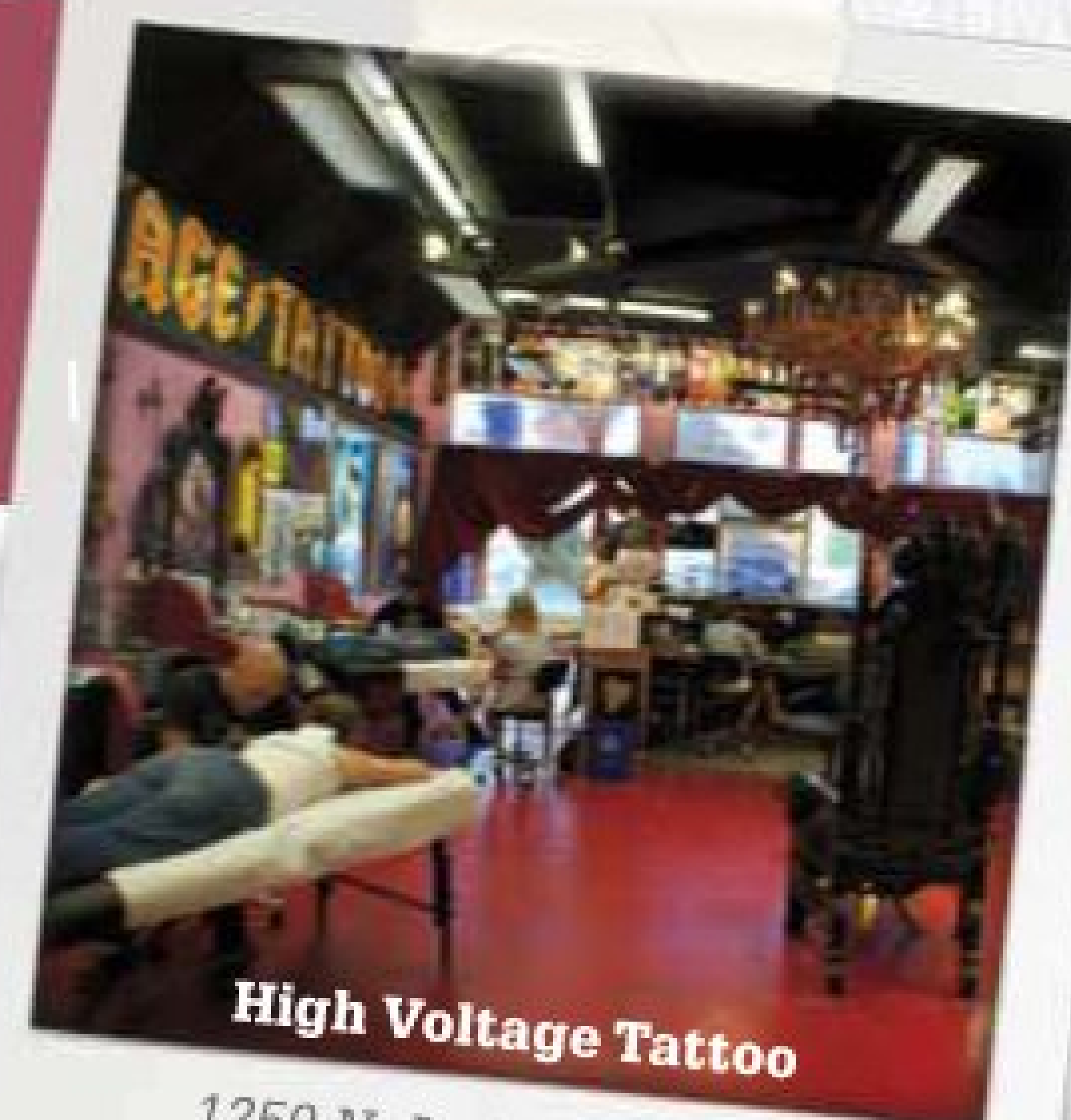
Many have watched her television show, browsed through her books, read about her in the tabloids and created a persona of Kat Von D in their minds, but few know the real Katherine von Drachenberg. Who could take on such a big task? Barbara Pavone has a damn good crack at it:

A passionate, at times self-conscious, self-professed workaholic, she's one hell of an artist in any medium she tackles and maybe that's because she never rests.

Calling in from her Los Angeles home at 7 a.m., after her routine morning workout, Von D laughingly informs me; "This is kinda late for me, actually."

Before Kat Von D became the master of black and grey portraiture that she is today, Katherine von Drachenberg was a tattoo-enamoured teenager with no-one to apprentice under, but convinced that she had found her calling. The punk

rock kids she was hanging around with first introduced her to the art form and at age 14 she undertook her first client. "I got hanging around this one guy who was tattooing out of his house and he was like, 'You draw really good, you should tattoo me.' I had no idea it could even be a career, I just wanted



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to do it because of the art and there you go. The first second I started tattooing I knew that I was in love with this and I was like, 'I need to do this. I'm not even sure exactly what

Most people go through an apprenticeship where somebody more experienced guides you through and it's a learning process. I was doing everything unprofessionally and had to learn everything the hard way, I guess.

I'm doing, but I know that I want to do this.'" Landing her first job at a tattoo shop at the age of 16, it was all uphill from there. Yes, uphill. "Most people go through an apprenticeship where somebody more experienced guides you through and it's a learning process. I was doing everything unprofessionally and had to learn everything the hard way, I guess."

Being a female in the industry couldn't have made things easier either, but Von D never put any weight on the matter. "I've always kinda hated the fact that there had to be an issue. I think this is a male-dominated world to begin with, so I think every woman can relate to it for the most part - I never had any really bad problems, just a few remarks and things that I had to deal with, but I don't know, maybe I really never paid attention to the knuckleheads."

No matter the challenges, Von D never ceased pursuing her passion and in 2007, when she was just 25-years-old, she opened up her own tattoo shop. Settling on a hometown for High Voltage Tattoo wasn't difficult and not to sound melodramatic, she simply followed her heart.

Born in Mexico, Von D moved to California with her family when she was just four-years-old. "We lived about an hour and a half outside of Los Angeles"

LA INK

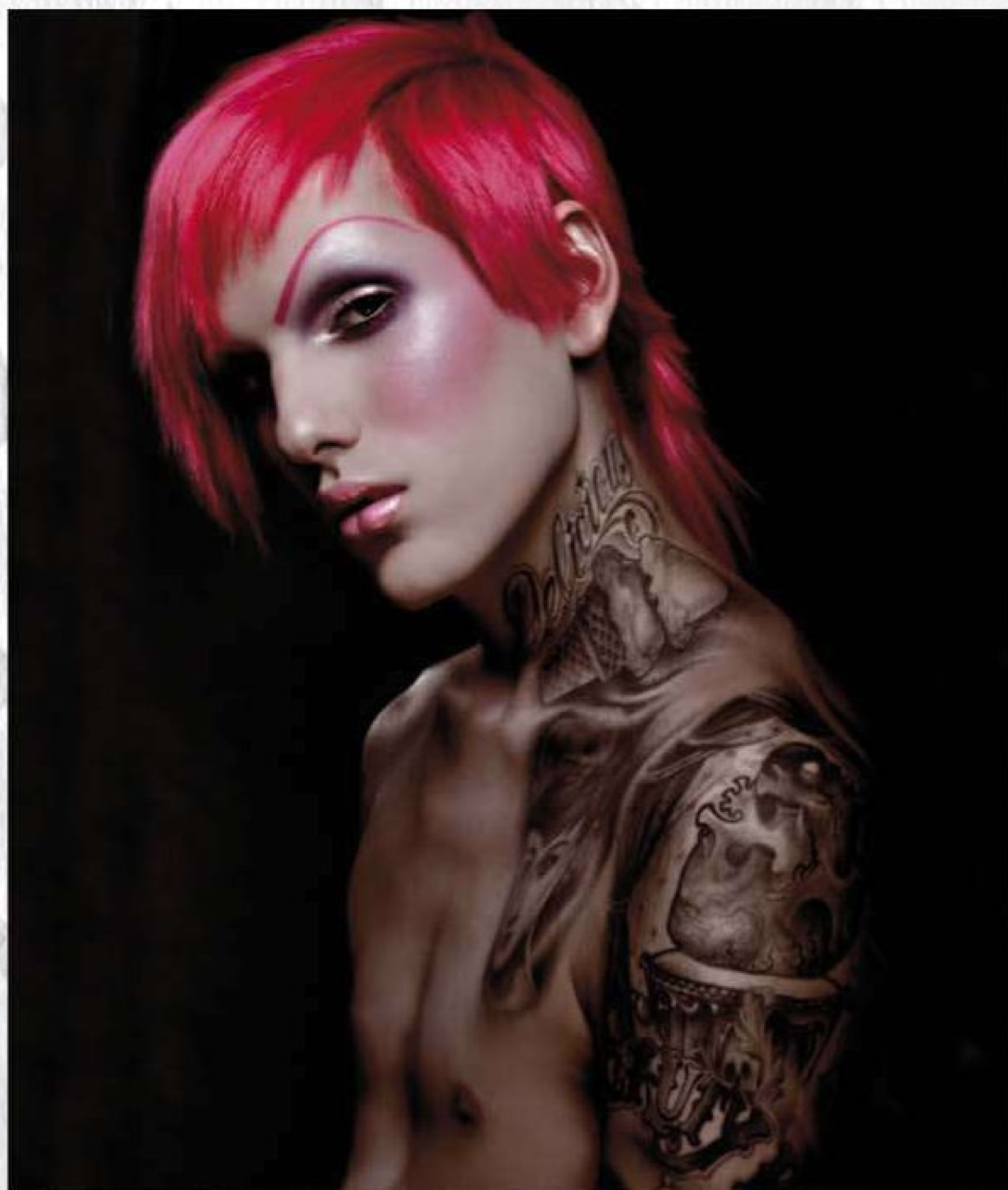
Kat Von D was first broadcasted into living rooms across North America when she joined the all-male staff of hit TV show *Miami Ink*. As the series slowly morphed from a documentary format into reality TV, the drama mounted with every episode and *Miami Ink*'s third season finished with Von D leaving the shop and returning home to Los Angeles.

Fans of Von D didn't have to wait long to see her again however because the network quickly debuted a spin-off series, which was appropriately titled, *LA Ink*. The new show starred Von D and chronicled the opening of her very own tattoo shop, High Voltage Tattoo (yes, Von D drew inspiration from AC/DC), and all of the action that ensued. Like the time Von D broke a Guinness world record by tattooing 400 people with an "LA" logo in 24 hours.

LA Ink's original cast included Corey Miller, Hannah Aitchison and Kim Saigh, but things have changed considerably over the past six seasons. This trio is no longer tattooing at High Voltage and the shop now showcases the talents of other remarkable artists like Jeff Ward, Adam Forman and Dan Smith, to name just a few.

The shop has also attracted many high profile clients over the years, like Motörhead's Lemmy Kilmister, Scott Ian of Anthrax and Jared Leto of 30 Seconds To Mars. High Voltage has also seen its fair share of real-life stars and heroes come through its doors.

It may be the talented artists that keep people swarming into High Voltage Tattoo, but I think the unique atmosphere created by pink walls lined with everything from guitars and skate decks to religious iconography ain't hurting either.





I think it was something about the city itself that we gravitated towards. We felt at home here - there's a certain energy that comes from this city. A certain artistic and very inspiring energy.

and once my sister got her permit for driving, we were pretty much trying to sneak off to LA at any moment that we possibly could. I think it was something about the city itself that we gravitated towards. We felt at home here - there's a certain energy that comes from this city. A certain artistic and very inspiring energy."

The creation of High Voltage Tattoo and the shop's inner workings were documented on the hit television show LA Ink, which recently finished airing its sixth season in North America. Not having owned a television herself in almost 14 years, Von D relies on rough cuts to keep up with the show. Although she doesn't have a final say in the editing process, she admits, "There's been plenty of times where I was like, 'What the fuck? You can't do that. I wasn't even in the room and you edited it that way!'"

But sometimes things remain against her will and Kat hopes viewers are able to see past the illusions created in the editing room. "I like to believe that people are smarter than that and don't believe everything they see - especially

when editors splice up certain sentences or there's no continuity. Like if my hair is a different shade of red in every scene, I can't dye my hair in ten minutes! I've had to learn to really let go of a lot of that stuff."

Filming a single season of LA Ink takes several months and is a five-day a week

commitment. Asked if she ever wishes she could just tell the cameras to leave, Von D laughs, "Every day," and justifies herself by admitting it affects her work. "I think I have a hard time with too many chiefs in the teepee, if you know what I mean. I like my privacy and I like the intimacy that happens when you're



tattooing someone one on one. The magic in that part of the tattoo process is definitely gone once you invite the cameras in."

The intimate moments she shares with her clients are the very subject of Von D's personal tattoo journals, which have recently been turned into a book entitled, *The Tattoo Chronicles*. A follow-up to her New York Times bestselling debut, *High Voltage*

I did the *High Voltage Tattoo* book, which did really well and so, from a publisher's standpoint, they're like, 'Lets do it again, but better and bigger.'



Tattoo, the new release is a lot more personal than its predecessor, but before addressing my questions about *The Tattoo Chronicles*, Von D has one last point to make about *LA Ink*: "I really hope I didn't come off like I was complaining about the show because I'm very grateful for it!"

Returning to the subject of her new book, Von D recounts how the idea of publishing some of her diaries came about. "I did the *High Voltage Tattoo* book, which did really well and so, from a publisher's standpoint, they're like, 'Lets do it again, but better and bigger.' And I'm like, 'Well, I don't really know what to write about. I can talk about tattooing all day long, but you don't have to hear it from me.'"

The book is exactly what its title suggests: a collection of entries from Von D's tattoo diaries. Spanning from May 2008 to June 2009, the book offers a look at the clients and stories behind Kat Von D's work, lessons she's learned from them, her personal musings on life and more. "This book is pretty much the most open, honest thing that I've ever put my heart into. I've emotionally invested a lot into it and that's why I wanted to photograph everything in it. Aside from the layout and printing the damn thing, I did ☺"



NIKKI SIXX

Where to begin? Nikki Sixx, or Frank Carlton Serafino Ferrana Jr. if you really want to be proper, is probably best known for being the bassist of internationally acclaimed rock super group Mötley Crüe. But just like his ex-girlfriend Kat Von D, Nikki Sixx seems to be a perpetual multitasker.

In addition to *The Crüe*, Sixx is involved in a musical side-project, *Sixx:A.M.*, which formed in 2007 in Los Angeles and includes DJ Ashba and James Michael. He also hosts a radio show, *Sixx Sense*, which is broadcasted nationwide from 7p.m. until midnight every weekday. Then there's his clothing line that brings rock star-worthy wears to the public, *Royal Underground*, and his bestselling non-fiction book, *The Heroin Diaries: A Year in the Life of a Shattered Rock Star*.

Then there are the sides of Sixx that the public does not usually see, but that are now revealed firsthand through Von D's journal entries in *The Tattoo Chronicles*. Pearl Aday first put the two into contact with one another when Von D unknowingly agreed to a blind date with Sixx. Although said date never happened, the two remained virtual friends and met several months later at which point Von D says she discovered her "match in hell, heaven, or whatever you wanna call it."

Von D's book holds a wealth of insight into Sixx, as he was an integral part of her life at the point in time when *The Tattoo Chronicles* was written. For example, the inner romantic within Sixx is revealed, as is his infinite love for his family and his appreciation for simple pleasures like reading and photography. Who knew the badass rocker was such a lovely softy inside?



I've realized that I've learned so much from everybody that I tattoo that it would be a shame if I didn't share it with everybody else in hopes that maybe they can learn something too or find comfort.

everything in that book."

Her deep emotional connection to the project may stem from the fact that journaling has played an important role in Von D's life. "I struggle with depression, I'm pretty open about that and so my friend gave me a suggestion to maybe start writing about everything after I'm done with a tattoo, so that I could just filter it out and let it go. I'm a big fan of journaling in general and I have like 10 journals going on at once," she laughs. "The tattoo journals, I first started like, 'John Doe is coming in from Arizona and getting a portrait of his son.' Then, as I started writing more and more in-depth about each person, I started processing a lot of my own issues - I've realized that I've learned so much from everybody that I tattoo that it would be a shame if I didn't share it with everybody else in hopes that maybe they can learn something too or find comfort."

Another glimpse into Von D's true nature reveals itself - although she's proud of the book, she humbly says, "I'm not a photographer and I'm not an author. People are like, 'Oh, you're an author now,' and I'm like, 'No, I've written some books, but I can't flatter myself by saying that.'"

If her tattooing, show, book and make-up collection for Sephora weren't enough, the Queen of multi-tasking recently opened an art gallery next door to High Voltage Tattoo. "I'm excited about creating a place that will bring artistic influence into the city," she says of her Wonderland Gallery. "I think there's a lot of cool museum and stuff like that here, but a lot of those places can be intimidating. I want just a cool place that has fine art, but that appeals to the younger crowd, so you don't just feel like Julia Roberts in Pretty Woman when you go in."

RECENT MISFORTUNE

"In order to gain everything, you must lose everything," tweeted Kat Von D on Monday, November 22, the day after a fire destroyed her home and took the life of her beloved hairless cat, Valentine. The cause of the fire is unknown, but it left the interior of Von D's Hollywood Hills home almost completely charred. The house, which the artist herself dubbed "the Frankenstein Castle," was Gothic in style and said to have been built as a replica of the doctor's home from the classic Frankenstein film.

Von D was in the middle of her book tour, promoting *The Tattoo Chronicles* and meeting loving fans across the States, when the tragedy occurred. But staying true to her strong, driven nature, Von D was quick to reassure the public that she would continue on her tour to Canada and Europe as planned. "No, I'm not canceling the rest of the book tour,"



she tweeted on Monday. "Rooftop [and] I are here in Vancouver. Thank you all for comforting words." She may have lost some of her worldly possessions and a treasured feline that can surely never be replaced, but Von D remained optimistic following the saddening event. "I am so looking forward to meeting all your smiling faces at these book signings!" she added on her Twitter page. "Remember, POSITIVE ENERGY FEEDS POSITIVE ENERGY." We're channeling all of ours to the lovely Kat Von D.

I think if people just remembered that everybody is either somebody's daughter or mother or son, brother, father, we'd probably treat each other a lot better.

And that's not all. She also reveals she's been taking voice lessons, putting together a band and, whenever she has any downtime, working with all the artistic media she can; "Right now I'm creating a chandelier out of antique crucifixes." Just as I begin to suspect that Kat Von D never actually sleeps, she proves my point by adding, "I've also been secretly filming a documentary for the past year and a half." If it sounds like a lot, that's because it is, but Von D says, "I'm a workaholic and I find joy in work. I don't know what it's like to not do anything and I don't wanna find out."

When I bring up the term "reality TV star" to ask about misconceptions the public may have of Kat Von D, I can almost hear her cringe. "Ugh, I hate that term. We used to be under a Doc Series format where it wasn't about drama and then the network decided to change it. That's why I have such a hard time with the show, because I absolutely hate drama."

And that really plays into her personality. "I'm semi-reclusive and shy and at times self-conscious," she admits. "I'm definitely not perfect. I think if people just remembered that everybody is either somebody's daughter or mother or son, brother, father, we'd probably treat each other a lot better and give each other a lot more breaks. I think any preconceived perception is a misconception."

One of the biggest mistakes made may be in assuming just how hard it is to get tattooed by Von D. "I think a lot of people have exaggerated things and because of the show a lot of people think I'm inaccessible." In reality, Von D says she and her assistant answer every request that's submitted and adds, "I

WONDERLAND GALLERY

Located right next door to High Voltage Tattoo in West Hollywood, Wonderland Gallery is one of the latest additions to a string of side projects from the brilliant mind of Kat Von D. Hoping to create a space in which unique art could be showcased without the pretentious air present in some art galleries around the city, Von D set out to create Wonderland.

And like everything else she takes part in, Von D wanted this undertaking to turn out perfectly. When I spoke to her a few weeks back, Von D was putting the finishing touches on Wonderland Gallery before setting off on her whirlwind book tour around the world. "You need to remember that I'm obsessive compulsive, so I need everything perfect," she said when asked her thoughts on the state of the gallery. "It's totally functional and great, if anybody where to walk in right now they'd be amazed by the art that's there, [but] there's just little corners that I would like to have brass molding, all the books to be in alphabetical order, things like that."

Wonderland Gallery's first exhibit was unveiled on September 2 and came courtesy of classically trained American artist Kevin Llewellyn. Entitled "The Unsaid," the exhibit features Llewellyn's signature realism-meets-fantasy-meets-mysticism artwork. If that sounds confusing, the title of my personal favorite Llewellyn painting should provide more insight into the nature of his work: "The Severed Hands of Nikki Sixx." www.WonderlandLA.com
Wonderland Gallery, 1257 N LABREA, HOLLYWOOD, CA USA 90038



THE TATTOO CHRONICLES

Barbara Pavone

I have to admit, when I first picked up *The Tattoo Chronicles* I was skeptical about what the inside front cover was promising to deliver. The last line on that page reads, "Here she is: The real Kat Von D: unscripted and uncensored," but it's hard not to picture a cautious editor chiseling away at Kat Von D's diaries, cutting off all the messy bits.

Now, let me admit that this was one time in my life when I was elated to be proved wrong. Von D's second book is unabashedly open and truthful and it's no wonder she calls her journals her "blood books."

Comprised of journal entries from a little over one year, beginning in 2008, the book offers an intimate glimpse into Von D's life. *The Tattoo Chronicles* strikes the

perfect balance between Von D's work and personal experiences, offering something for tattoo lovers and Von D lovers alike.

Marvelously illustrated and finely laid out, the book features a gamut of Von D's work, from intricate portraits to touch-ups and cover-ups, and shares stories about a medley of clients ranging from famed rockers like Dave Navarro and Motorhead's Lemmy Kilmister to everyday heroes and rad individuals.

Von D's more personal entries, like those about sobriety, self-doubt, romantic turmoil and frustrations with *LA Ink*, play up the uniqueness of the book. *The Tattoo Chronicles* documents a specific moment in time for a specific person and yet,

it's unbelievably relatable to almost all.

Adding to the charm are color photographs of clients, tattoos and Von D's personal quirky collections of everything from vintage keys to her beloved taxidermy. Maybe it's just me, but the albino squirrels are a treat and a must-see.

The Tattoo Chronicles is a great read and may best be described as fully encompassing what Von D's upper back tattoo, incidentally featured at the end of the book, has proclaimed for years: "Mi Vida Loca."



I only book out two months because you don't know what's gonna happen in two months. People think I charge a million dollars to talk or something. I also don't tattoo you on a throne of gold!" she laughs. "High Voltage is a real tattoo shop and everyone who comes through gets a real experience."



only book out two months because you don't know what's gonna happen in two months. People think I charge a million dollars to talk or something. I also don't tattoo you on a throne of gold!" she laughs. "High Voltage is a real tattoo shop and everyone who comes through gets a real experience."

Von D's own experiences at the shop are also something she surely wouldn't give up easily. In addition to meeting inspiring clients, Von D's co-workers are some of the best and coolest in the business. Think Dan Smith, Dennis

Halbritter and Khoi Nguyen, among others. "All the guys I work with are really talented - I'm constantly learning from them, but it's not a matter of giving advice. I think the best kind of advice is not to give any, unless it's asked for." So how would this tattoo artist extraordinaire sum herself up? Finishing the sentence 'Kat Von D is...' quickly becomes the toughest challenge of our conversation. "Is at a loss of words?" laughs Von D. "I don't know, I think I would leave it blank and add a period." The mystery continues. ★

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WORDS: SARAH ANGELL PHOTOGRAPHS: EUGENE RUBULS

A DESIGN FOR LIFE

Southampton is shrouded in thick, dark clouds. Their ominous presence poses the constant threat of a downpour, creating a thick atmosphere and a foreboding backdrop for my visit to the little studio, Tattooz by Design:

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SOUTHAMPTON
Hampshire
SO15 3AR.
Tel: 02380 322486
Email:
tattoozbydesign@
hotmail.com

Entering the studio I am encapsulated by a small room with walls emblazoned with bold, bright and intricate flash artwork. The familiar buzz of needles seeps through the walls as I am introduced to Eugene Rubuls, the Latvian tattooist whose expertise is causing a stir despite only being on the opposite end of a needle for less than three years.

Eugene's tattooing history may be in its infancy, but his artistic background spans years, transcends media and has an all-encompassing stylistic reach. "I believe my artistic ability came to me from my father, he was a sculptor and I've been drawing for as long as I can remember. Pencils and watercolour

were my favourite toys as a child. I only started painting three years ago when I came to England. Before that I used watercolour, charcoal and pastel'.

It was an unconventional calling that brought Eugene to the shores of the UK. He went from doing character portraits and penning temporary tattoos on the beaches of Latvia to undergoing an NVQ in catering. "I always like creating something with my hands", says Eugene. Clearly his creative flair can flow through any medium, including food. Eugene's work life then took a turn when he was inspired to undergo training that allowed him to work on a gas tanker as a chef. "I worked on the gas tanker world wide for about five years. I liked to travel and see different places".

It was in Latvia that Eugene was first introduced to tattooing having approached a studio to have some work done, the tattooist was so impressed by his designs that Eugene began to build a portfolio before gaining the most expeditious apprenticeship he could have hoped for, here in the UK. "A Polish guy called Tulipan offered me an apprenticeship after seeing my drawings. He saw that I had steady hands and offered me the chance to do tattoos on some of his mates during the first few days of my apprenticeship. Soon after, I had my friends willing to have tattoos as well. "

Eugene's inquisitive attitude and determination coupled with his innate talent soon saw him progress into the stages of an apprenticeship that could



**I HAVE BEEN TATTOOING
NEARLY THREE YEARS NOW
AND FROM THE BEGINNING I
ALWAYS WANTED TO CREATE
SOMETHING BIG AND READABLE
FROM A DISTANCE LIKE A
PAINTING OR A SCULPTURE.**

They come to life with a vivacity that is beautifully realised. The pieces that stand out from this myriad of colour depict ferocious lions, majestic leopards and sinuous reptiles and even tiger-rabbits! "I like my clients to trust me" says Eugene. "It gives me freedom and the responsibility to design an idea. I start from basic shapes and body flow, and then add shadows, values and details. I see a tattoo as a decoration of the body and want to be sure the design fits the client. I have been tattooing nearly three years now and from the beginning I always wanted to create something big and readable from a distance like a painting or a sculpture."

Painting has always formed the basis for Eugene's artwork. From classical to art nouveau to Trompe L'oeil (the method of using intricate detail to create a three dimensional effect on a flat canvas) as well as Chinese art. ☺



take years to reach. "Those days, I worked from 6am until 3pm in the kitchen and after 4 until 10pm in the studio. I asked Tulipan 1,000 questions a day about tattooing and on my days off I went to conventions such as London, Brighton, Tattoo Jam.... I was always asking questions, and the more answers I had, the more questions I asked!"

Three years later, Eugene's skills have strengthened into an enviable talent, but his learning process continues with every piece of work that he creates. With every tattoo comes a new experience. "Tattooing appeals to me over other media of art because it is the most demanding and requires responsibility".

Eugene's tattoos reflect his painting style; brightly coloured, infinitely detailed and expertly accomplished.



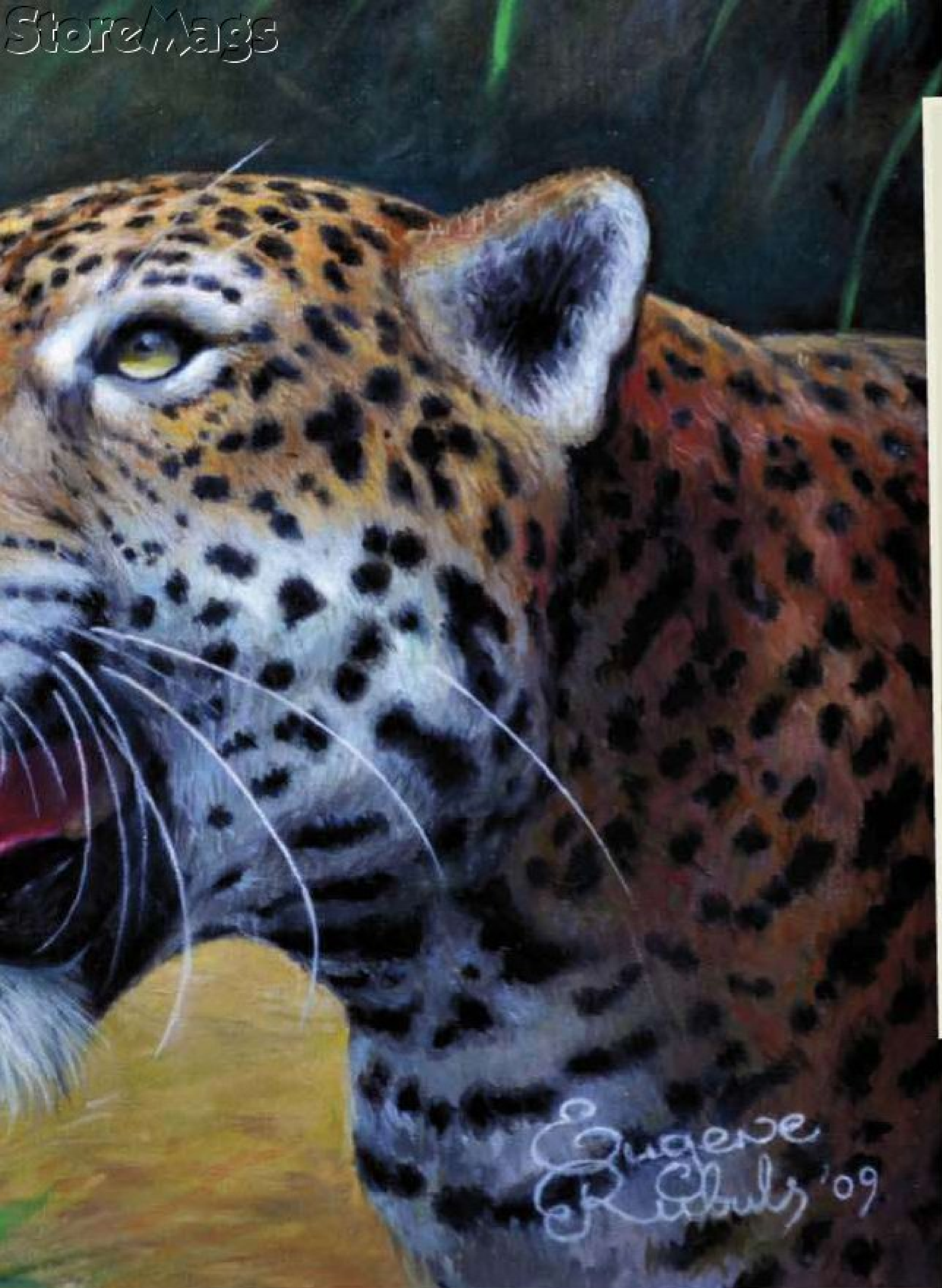


"I guess my paintings are kind of a mixture of all things that attract me. It can be nature or interesting character. Art is everywhere and I always try to paint something better than before."

Constantly striving to push the boundaries of his skills, Eugene took to tattooing his own thighs in order to further his talent. "They are a tiger and a lion portrait and are quite large, the roundness of my thighs gives a bit of a 3D look to them. It was a good exercise because I had to do them upside down and I wanted to feel and know

I GUESS MY PAINTINGS ARE KIND OF A MIXTURE OF ALL THINGS THAT ATTRACT ME. IT CAN BE NATURE OR INTERESTING CHARACTER.





tattooing inside out. How ink goes in the skin, what hand movements are more efficient and less painful, different configurations of needles and it was kind of a challenge to myself. My tattoo work is still in progress and always developing. For an artist, there is no perfection", he muses.

Despite only having worked one international convention to date, Eugene managed to scoop both first and second place in the large colour category at the Bournemouth Convention this year. "I plan to do as many conventions as possible", Eugene tells me. "I like the spirit of the tattoo society at conventions!"

Eugene has a long list of influences that have informed his work over the years, such as, Guy Aitchison, Jeff Gogue, Shige, Paul Booth and Mike DeVries - to more recent influences as his research continues such as Nikko Hurtado, Yang Zhuo, Shawn Barber, Uncle Allan, Jess Yen, Juan Salgado, Carlos Torres, Bob Tyrell and Robert Hernandez."

"I'm really thankful to my dad, colleagues and Pix, who taught me a lot of technical aspects of tattooing, Karen and Simon Faith for the great opportunity of working here at Tattooz by Design and Alvis Caune from Neo Tattoo in Latvia because he is the guy that inspired me to tattoo".

A post-interview visit to Eugene's art room at his house reveals film characters intermingling with beautiful female figures in bold, bright paintings while delicate watercolors depict

A MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE

The phrase Trompe L'oeil is most often used in relation to the Baroque period of art where it referred to perspectival realism, but its roots actually go back much further than this. There's a great story about a contest between two Greek painters: Zeuxis' entry into the competition was of a still-life that was apparently so real, birds flew down from the sky to peck at the ornamental grapes. His rival in the contest, Parrhasius, then asked Zeuxis to pull back the tattered curtains so they could judge the painting behind them, Parrhasius was declared the winner as his painting was of the curtains themselves. Fooling the birds is cool, but fooling other painters trumps all.

One of the best examples of the form is Escaping Criticism (shown above) by Pere Borrell del Caso. Fans of art in architecture will recognise the perspective fooling mechanism as it is also widely used in 16th and 17th churches to give depth where there is none.





MY TATTOO WORK IS STILL IN PROGRESS AND ALWAYS DEVELOPING. FOR AN ARTIST, THERE IS NO PERFECTION

unsettled landscapes, with skies as full of emotive clouds as those that hang over us outside. A blue dragon wraps itself inquisitively around a ball of light that highlights its soft curves and streamlined koi carps seemingly glide across their canvases.

With artwork like this to his name and so much more to accomplish in the future, Eugene will no doubt be experiencing every success in his ongoing journey into the world of tattooing. ★



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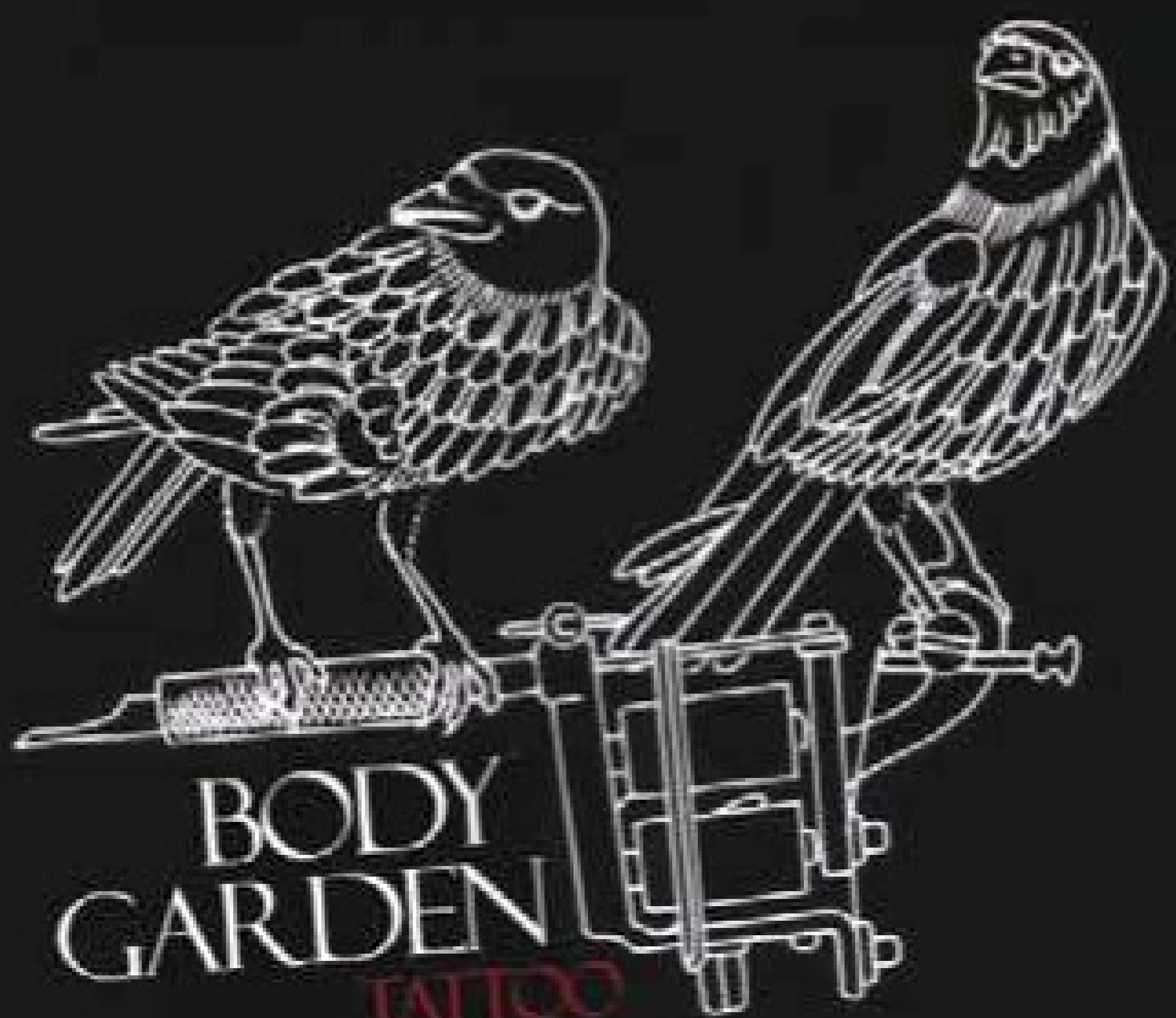
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WORDS: RIK VAN BOECKEL
PHOTOGRAPHS: LOWRIDER TATTOO

THE KING OF BLACK & GREY

The American/Mexican tattoo artist José Lopez developed his black & grey style from tattoos made in the prisons of California and amongst gang members in the streets of the big cities in the 'sunny state'. Fine lines, soft shadows, realism with a magical Mexican touch! During the Dutch conventions of Breda and Amsterdam, Jose Lopez' crew were a living billboard for the tattoos of the artist behind Lowrider Tattoo, located in Fountain Valley, a suburb of Los Angeles:



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Fountain Valley, CA
92708, USA
Tel: (714)4189575
www.lowridertattoo
studios.com

“ When I started tattooing, I did colour at first,” Lopez tells me during the Amsterdam Convention while sitting in his wheelchair. “On paintings I use colours but on tattoos I prefer now the really soft grey tones. The demand for black and grey is so big, I have a lot of friends who are better than me at colour tattoos so I leave it to them.”

Lopez has lived in Los Angeles since he was 12 years old. “I am from Michoacán, a state in the middle of Mexico on the Pacific, not far from Acapulco. From there I moved with my family to Los Angeles. When I was 15 years old I got an accident and wound up in a wheelchair. That's what got me in tattooing in the first place. When I got in the chair I was very depressed, I was sitting in my room - my friends

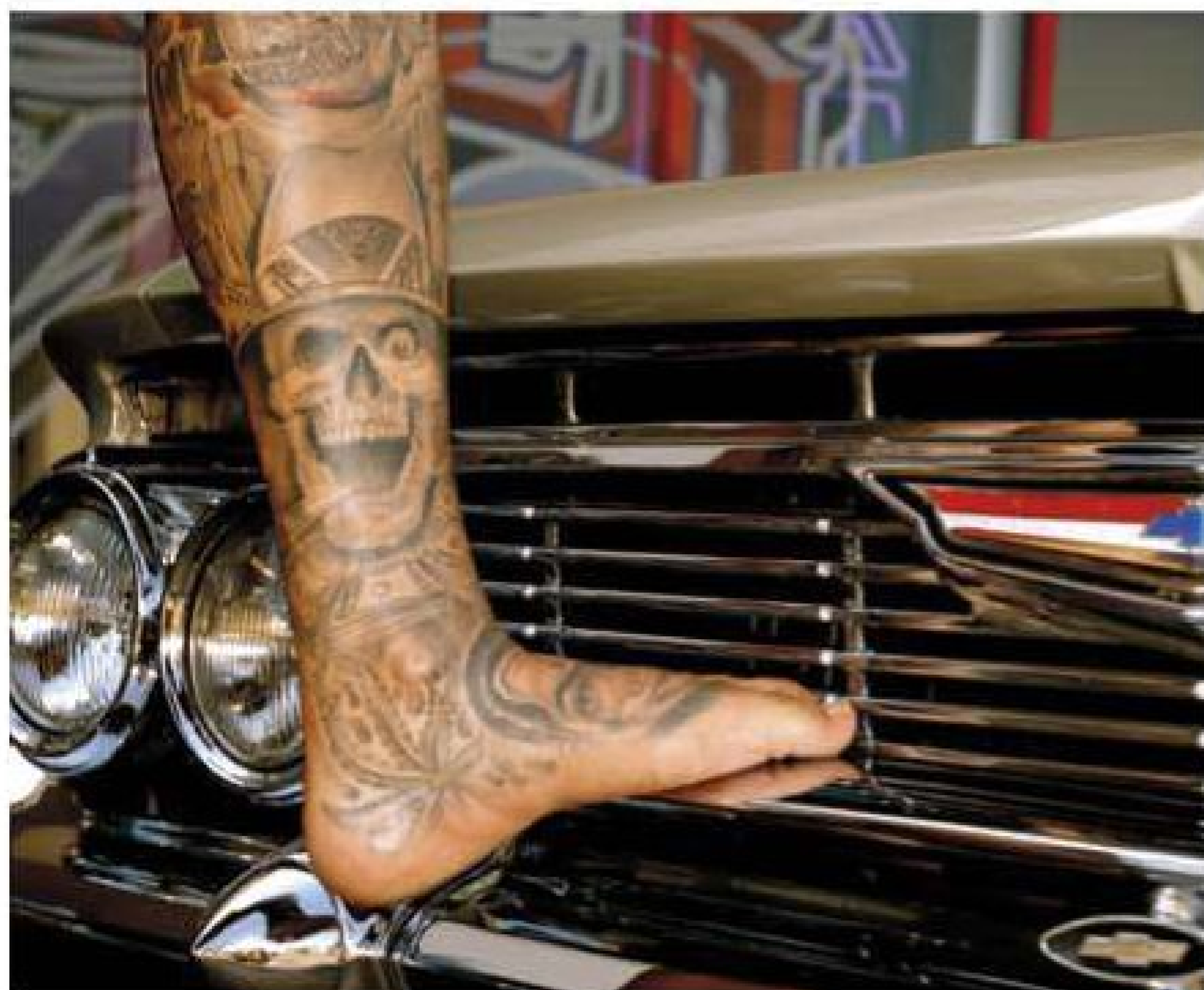
gave me some magazines and I started to draw. I use to look at books, I used to copy, try to make the drawings as realistic as possible. That's how I learn to draw, so I use a lot of references in my designs - Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, many religious images, it's already been drawn.”

DIA DE LOS MUERTOS

When Lopez started to tattoo 17 years ago, he gave his own twist to these images. “In my hands it tends to be something else. So even though it's something that's already there, while drawing and tattooing it becomes one of my drawings. That's something I learnt to develop over the past 17 years. I do freehand work as well but over the years you get so many ideas but you can't just draw stuff out of

your imagination. So a lot of what I do is referencing.”

Ten years ago Lopez started Lowrider Tattoo that also has locations in Orange and Costa Mesa, both in California. Before he tattooed at home. His black and grey style is not only popular in the USA but also in Europe. “I have been to Europe before,” he says. “A popular image is El Dia de Muertos. There is also a big demand for designs like the Virgin Mary, the Madonna and images from sculptures of Michelangelo. Anything that has nice variations of grace, that's what I like. I mean it could be an evil skull piece or a very soft religious piece - or a nice girl, a portrait of somebody's daughter or son. I mean as long as it's black and grey I love to do it.”



THERE THEY USE A SINGLE NEEDLE, SO THE LINES ARE VERY FINE BUT THE THING THEY LACK IS THE SOFT SHADING BECAUSE THEY ONLY USE ONE SINGLE NEEDLE, YOU COULD SEE THE TEXTURE, THE DOTS BECAUSE THEY HAVE TO FILL BIG AREAS OF SHADING IN DIFFERENT ZONES.

TATTOO ICON

While I am talking with Lopez, I see in the busy booth of Lowrider Tattoo Manny Navarete, one of the oldest crew members. The crew helps him with the selling of t-shirts and boards with Lopez' drawings on. On Manny's skin I see different images that have a special Mexican connotation. "Manny is a tattoo icon," Lopez says. "He's one of the first guys that let me work on him and do a free piece. Even though it's pretty old, it's still one of my favourites. He is known for his tattoos. It's a whole front: Maria, she supposes to be like Mother Earth. It's hold is in Spanish and indigenous style. Mexico is in the background. The Spanish-Mexican side comes in and then the revolution comes in."

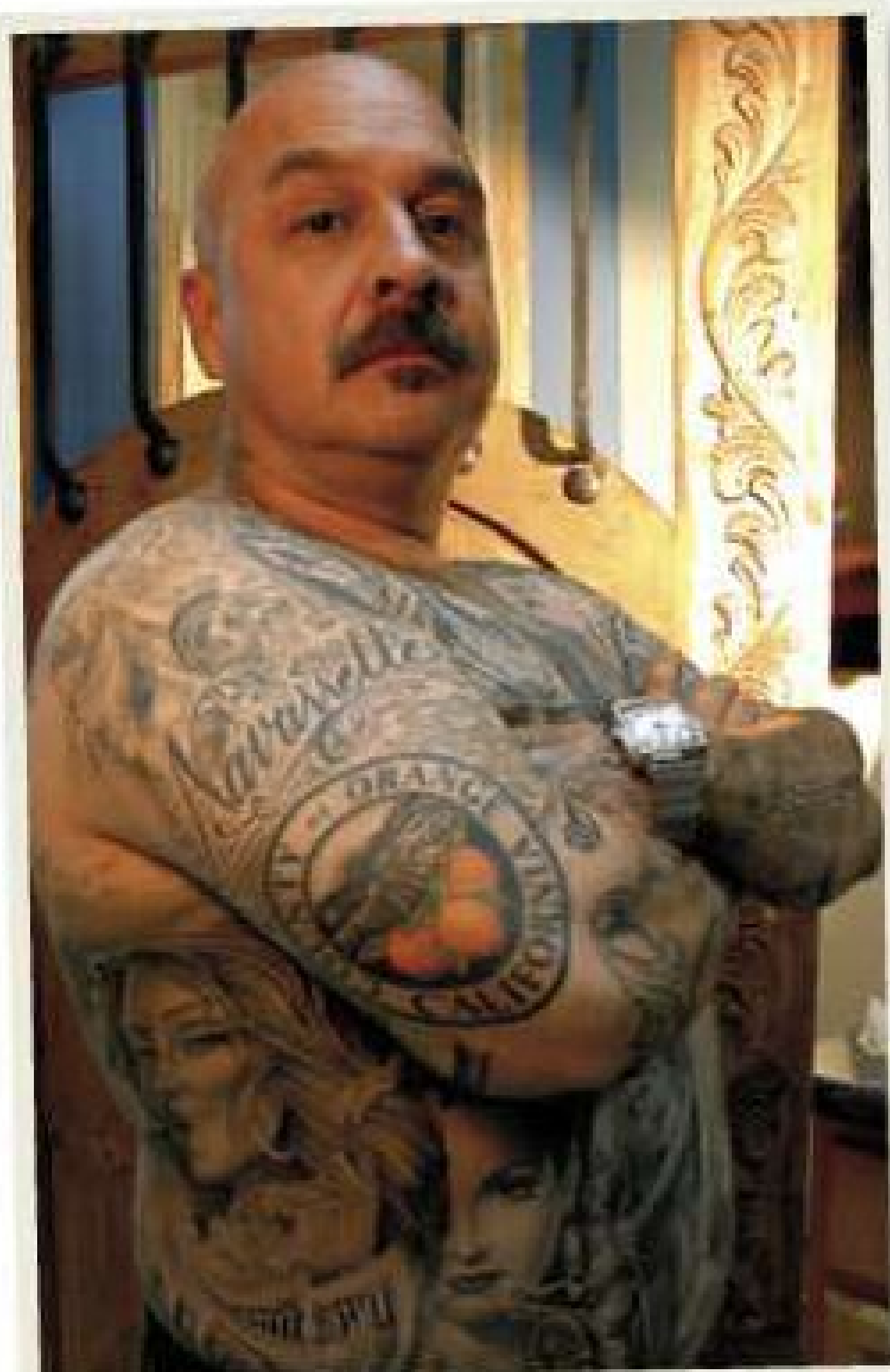
SOFT SHADOWS

Lopez explains that his style is derived from tattoos made in the prisons of California.

"There they use a single needle, so the lines are very fine but the thing they lack is the soft shading because they only use one single needle, you could see the texture, the dots because they have to fill big areas of shading in different zones. What I do, it has that same style, but it has a clean smooth shading to it. It looks very soft. I met people who never liked tattoos but when they see what we do, they say 'wow, I never thought tattoos could be like that'. In their minds they're thinking tattoos are dark and ugly and for people that are mean! When they see that they are so soft, their whole mind is changed"



THE CLIENT IS TAKING ALL THE PAIN, HAS TO UNDERSTAND THAT HE NEEDS TO SIT THERE TWO MORE HOURS AFTER HE HAD ALREADY SPENT SEVEN HOURS ON THE CHAIR.

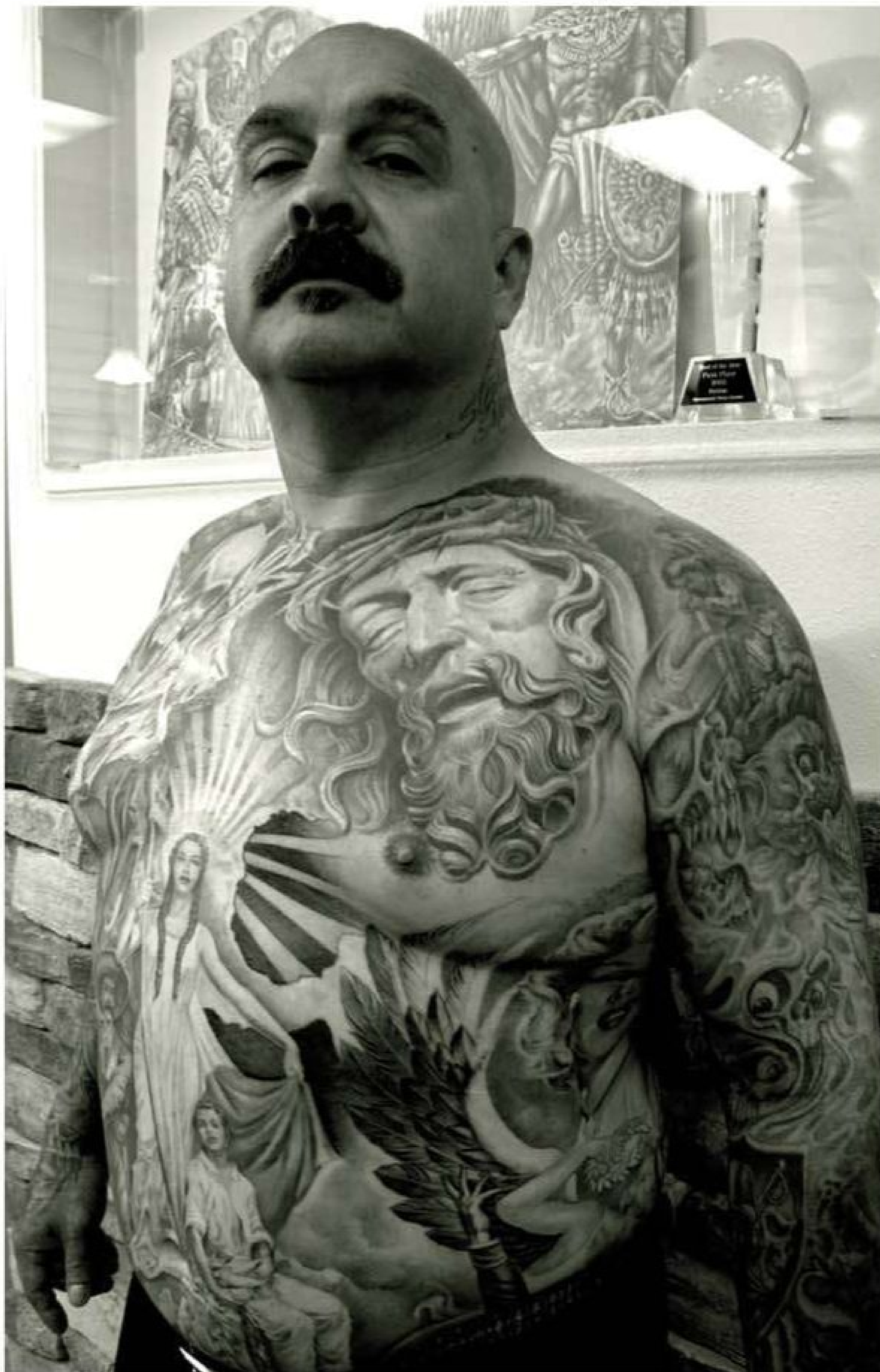


and so all of a sudden they like tattoos."

According to Lopez, the variation in light and shadow is very important with black and grey tattoos. "A lot of artists do black and grey tattoos just with simple lines and really light shading. It's nice and soft as well but you need to have different variations to make it pop out - you gotta have backgrounds, you gotta have the really dark contrast with the superlight tones. To be able to do that, a lot of times you have to do different sessions on tattoos which is something

people don't understand. You see a big piece complete, and you think it's done in a couple of hours, but it's a whole process. You have to do a layer and then come back, do another one and make it come out. The more you work on it, the more realistic it gets, the more dimensions it becomes."

And the way the artist does the shading is very important, Lopez adds: "It takes a lot of time, a lot of patience. Not only from me but also from the





client. The client is taking all the pain, has to understand that he needs to sit there two more hours after he had already spent seven hours on the chair. The client has to be willing to go through more pain and sometimes pay more money because it's very time consuming, you know."

GANGSTERSTYLE

The gangsterstyle is very popular, Lopez says. "It's a new style - those gangster tattoos originated in the prisons, in the streets. We brought street tattooing into professional studios and present this style of tattooing, not only to gangsters but to the masses. We're not doing like a dirty tattoo for the street. We're doing a very professional, very

smooth realistic gangstertattoo. It can be clowns or a gangster with a big moustache, the typical characteristics of an LA gangster. I do also a lot of lettering - Chicano style. If people want script, I do it. I started doing script when I started tattooing. We just know by nature, really fancy script, really cool handwriting. You know, the old English that's really gangsterstuff, really calligraphy, black lettering, it's something that gangsters like back home, that's our favourite writing."

Back in the day, gangstertattoos were very scratchy, dirty, very dark. Lopez: "The style is evolving. Now the people who are collecting the gangstertattoos are normal people like you and me. It's like somebody getting a Japanese ➔

For those of you who not down with the lingo, a Lowrider is a style of car that has had its suspension modified - most likely with hydraulics - so that rides as low as possible to the road. The style originates from 50s classics which were originally built like this - typically, it will also have many accessories and add ons and not surprisingly, many of them are not exactly "street-legal"

One wonders how they would deal with the traffic humps or "sleeping policemen" that are the bane of every driver in the UK.



tattoo. They are not Japanese, it's just a look. Anyone gets something and others say: I like that too. Just like the Ed Hardy look you see now on shirts, everyone wants that look. I think that the gangsterstyle is getting as popular as the Ed Hardy-look."

HIGHER PRICES, MORE VALUE

According to Lopez customers nowadays know exactly what they want. "In the past there was not much information. Today people can learn about tattoos

TODAY PEOPLE CAN LEARN ABOUT TATTOOS FROM MAGAZINES AND THE INTERNET. I THINK A LOT OF NEW PEOPLE ARE BECOMING MORE EDUCATED WITH TATTOOS.

from magazines and the internet. I think a lot of new people are becoming more educated with tattoos. I mean thanks to the internet, across the world people are curious, they want to know who's doing the best black and grey tattoos, who are the best artists out there, who's popular: they do a lot of research, they contact us and that's how we end up here."

Now the demand is so big, Lopez has had to raise his price: "Before my prices were very low, like 6 hours tattooing for 200 dollars. Now I can work on serious collectors and get rid of a lot of people that were not serious. I get these collectors from all kind of ethnicities. Black, white, Mexican, Japanese, Australian... when the price is high, not everybody can afford it but it gives more value for the person that collects the artwork. A friend of mine - Mr. Cartoon - his prices are very high but at the same time even though people don't like to pay the high prices, it gives the tattoo value. When somebody goes to Mr. Cartoon, it makes the customer feel good because he has a tattoo from him,

not everybody has. It costs a lot of money. So it's name branding. You don't become like everybody else. So people who are patient and wait, that call me for months in advance, they are the happiest men on earth! 'Yeah, I got a tattoo of José Lopez'."

Lopez is proud of his crew who are like living billboards for his splendid tattoos - and he is proud of the artists who continue to work in the Lowrider studios while he is in Europe. Artists like Jun, Clown, Abey and others. "They are talented upcoming artists. They are like family for me, just like the crew here. They pump up the booth, you know, we like to get along with everybody, we like to have our booth very energetic, it's part of our job. We like this environment, it makes us who we are and we like to engage with people, to talk to people, to interact - people hear about that and we thank all the people who helped us, they show us a lot of love. The organisers of the conventions, the fans. Thanks to them we can work at conventions like Breda, Amsterdam, Rome, Barcelona and London." ★

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FEAR AND LOATHING IN SOUTH DEVON

Tattoo 'virgin', Lee Griffiths, travels to Newton Abbot's Halloween Tattoo Bash No. 4 to savour the scary sights and sounds of one of the UK's most celebrated Tattoo events.

I don't know much about tattoos, I don't have a tattoo and the people I see with tattoos sometimes scare me, and as I'm edging closer to my very first Halloween Bash at Newton Abbot Racecourse in South Devon, an unsettling Halloween-related anxiety is beginning to kick in and send my mind into Wicker Man territory. Am I the loathed unassuming tattoo virgin about to be lured into the weird world of pagan ritual? Am I about to be seduced by a tattooed minx before I'm offered to the tattoo gods by way of being burnt alive in a giant wicker man? I don't even know the words to 'The Lord Is My Shepherd' for crying out loud!

As I move towards what looks like the Tattoo Bash entrance, I keep my head down, try to radiate the confidence of a man with no fear and quickly flash my credentials. Once inside, I'm instantly

hit with the relentless humming of three dozen tattoo needles going to work and my head becomes light. I feel nauseous and the blurred and indistinct shadows around me begin to swirl. Then, the darkened mist begins to clear in the near distance and I can clearly make out one magical word that seems to light up like a neon sign: 'Bar'.

After a pint of the good stuff I'm ready for action. My eyes dart between flashes of flesh on display, the glare of the headlamps from the tattoo surgeon-like artists and the Halloween-themed shapes and figures being applied to the body of all manner of punters. I spot one standout tattoo smiling back at me from the thigh of one particular serene looking customer, and recognise the

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY: NAME7

'ART OF INK' ON THE JOB.



A TERRIFYING FACE FROM 'SKINSHOZ'.





AN IMPRESSIVE LARGE COLOUR COURTESY OF 'NO REGRETS'



MALCOLM McDOWELL GETS INKED



'PHYSICAL GRAFFITI' EMBARK ON A LARGE COLOUR TATTOO

tattoo as the geeky face of Will from 'The Inbetweeners' with the words 'Briefcase Wanker' etched underneath. This seemingly normal and almost wholesome (not to mention completely hilarious and uncannily accurate) tattoo somehow acts as a symbol of solidarity between me and my tattooed friend. Indeed, I love 'The Inbetweeners', this tattoo chap loves The Inbetweeners and therefore we are brothers, and with this commonality and hormonal balance now established, I relax and begin to enjoy myself.

Newton Abbot's Halloween Tattoo Bash, organised by Mac and Rod from 'Painted & Punctured' in Wales, has gone from strength to strength since its comparatively modest beginnings back in 2007, which featured 40 tattoo artists from around the country. Now, enjoying its fourth year, there are nearly 100 artists at work here. Checking out the posters, banners and flyers dotted around the complex, I spotted respected tattoo names from all over the UK, from Physical Graffiti in Cardiff and Sakura Hand Tattooists in Edinburgh, to No

Regrets in Gloucester and Torquay's Revolver Tattoo Rooms.

Some of the artwork on show was absolutely stunning, and while I was still wincing on occasion (armpits and knees being tattooed were still a bit much for a fragile tattoo virgin such as myself), I was mostly in genuine awe. Amongst the abstract art and the Halloween-inspired ghouls and goblins were a diverse range of tattoos. During the evening, I spotted a particularly impressive wide-eyed Malcolm McDowell from A Clockwork Orange, a vibrant and very realistic Iggy Pop on the leg of one individual and some eerie, Einstein-type character on the leg of another. On the arms, legs and torsos of the people I see throughout the weekend, I saw Spawn, someone's great grandmother, the cutest close-up of someone's pet dog and pretty much everything in between.

As the Saturday's tattooing began to wind down, the weekend's compere, Hooray Henry, who functioned as my unofficial guide for the weekend, informed me that there would be a brief



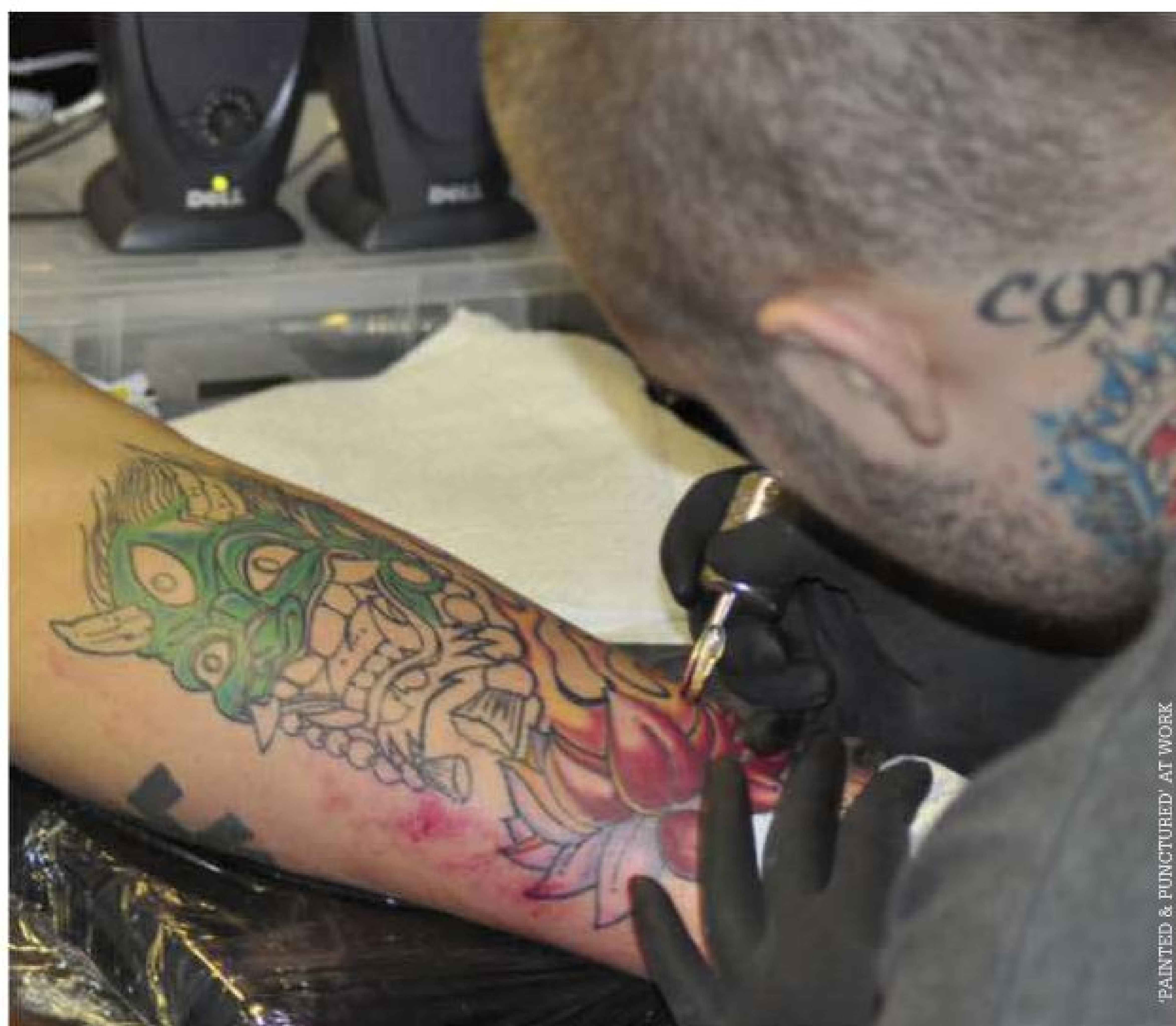
SCREAM OF THE CROP FROM 'NEEDLE ASYLUM'



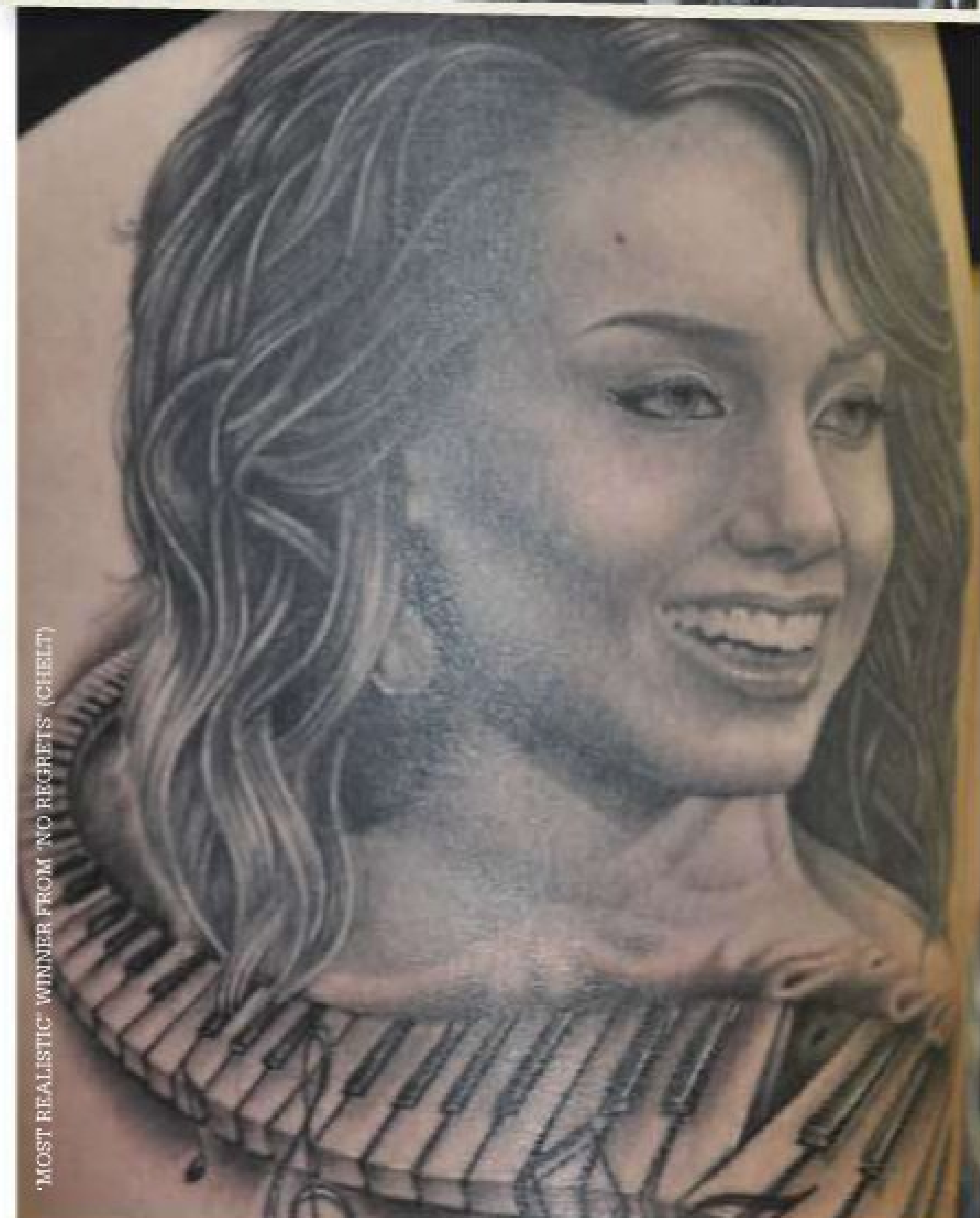
THE HABITUAL KNIFE-WIELDING MANIAC IN ATTENDANCE



STAR-CROSSED LOVER ZOMBIES...



'PAINTED & PUNCTURED' AT WORK



'MOST REALISTIC' WINNER FROM 'NO REGRETS' (CHELT)

interval between the tattooing and the infamous Halloween Ball which kicked off at 10 pm. At around 10.30 pm, the bar area began to fill up with an eclectic collection of saucy ghouls, petrifying pirates and a couple of impressive Hellboys. Indeed, the quality of the costumes at this year's event was so dazzlingly high that I felt completely out of place in my dull civilian clothes.

After eyeing up the competition around the bar area and taking photographs of each others' macabre attire, the party got under way and the costumed tattoo hordes hit the dance floor to the sounds of ska band, Too Hot. Unfortunately, due to the last bus home being scheduled to leave Newton Abbot far too early, I had to cram in as

much picture taking and hobnobbing as possible during my precious little time at the party, but after talking to a few of the artists and customers whose alcohol consumption had not yet reached maximum capacity, it was clear that all eyes were already on the prize and that the main event was yet to come on the Sunday afternoon: competition time.

In addition to a charity auction where various pieces of collectable and original artwork fetched some decent cash for Breast Cancer Research, Sunday also played host to the big competition where tattoo artists competed for prizes in a variety of categories, from 'Most Realistic' to 'Best Halloween/Horror' tattoo. I secured a good spot beside the stage where the various judges

sat patiently as the customers queued across the dance floor, eager to have their body artwork approved and given the thumbs up.

Not surprisingly, the competition was fierce and the standards were high. Watching with bated breath as each customer mounted the stage and proceeded to peel back a sleeve, raise a trouser leg or in one case, disrobe to a bikini in order to show her large neck-to-thigh colour tattoo, I tried to gauge the judges' faces in order to establish what they were looking for in a winner. They all looked good to me, though there were a few stand-out contributions that clearly impressed the judges more than others. No Regrets' striking Einstein tattoo from yesterday ➔

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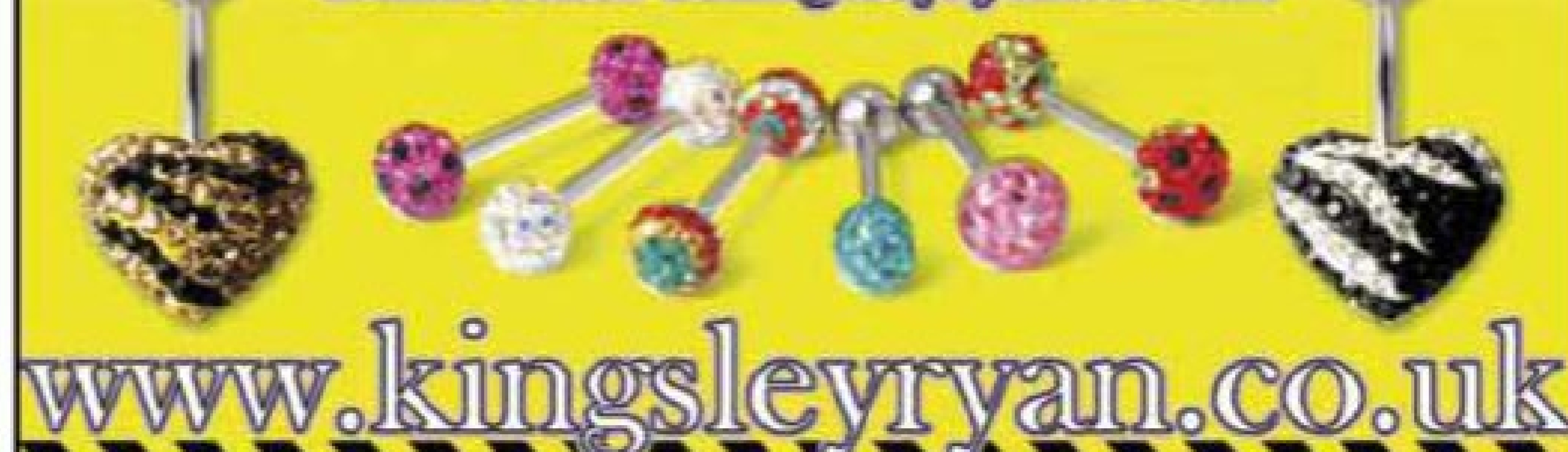
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'BEST IN SHOW' WINNER



THE HALLOWEEN BALL WAS ONE OF THE WEEKEND HIGHLIGHTS.



TATTOOED ARMPIT? THAT'S GOTTA HURT!



RED C/S IGGY POPS WITH VIBRANCY.

bagged 'Best in Show', and the guys at No Regrets also picked up prizes for 'Old/New School', 'Small Black/Grey' and 'Small Colour', while the impressive Alicia Keyes tattoo nabbed 'Most Realistic'. 7 Star Tattoo, Indigo, Bodyshock, Spear Studio and Kustom Kulture were also among the winners at this year's competition, though co-host, Rod, just missed out on the 'Fastest Gun' top prize (which went to Colin from Plymouth's Bodyshock), and is apparently already practicing for next year's face-off.

By the end of the Sunday shenanigans, I had lost count of how many tattoos I'd witnessed being done and how many of the finished products I'd glimpsed during the past day and a half. As I patrolled the aisles for one final time, the buzz of the needles, the droplets of blood and the grotesque horrors staring back at me from the legs, arms, bellies and backs of the customers no longer made me feel light-headed and queasy. As I bid my farewells and made my way to the exit, I was definitely beginning to see the appeal



AND THE AWARD FOR THE CUTEST TATTOO GOES TO...

and I was most certainly beginning to comprehend the artistry behind the tattoo and respect for the tattoo culture. These guys aren't so scary, and who knows, maybe next year I might even brave it and get a 'Briefcase Wanker' all of my own. ★

Halloween Tattoo Bash will be back next year on 29/30th October at Newton Abbot Racecourse, Devon.

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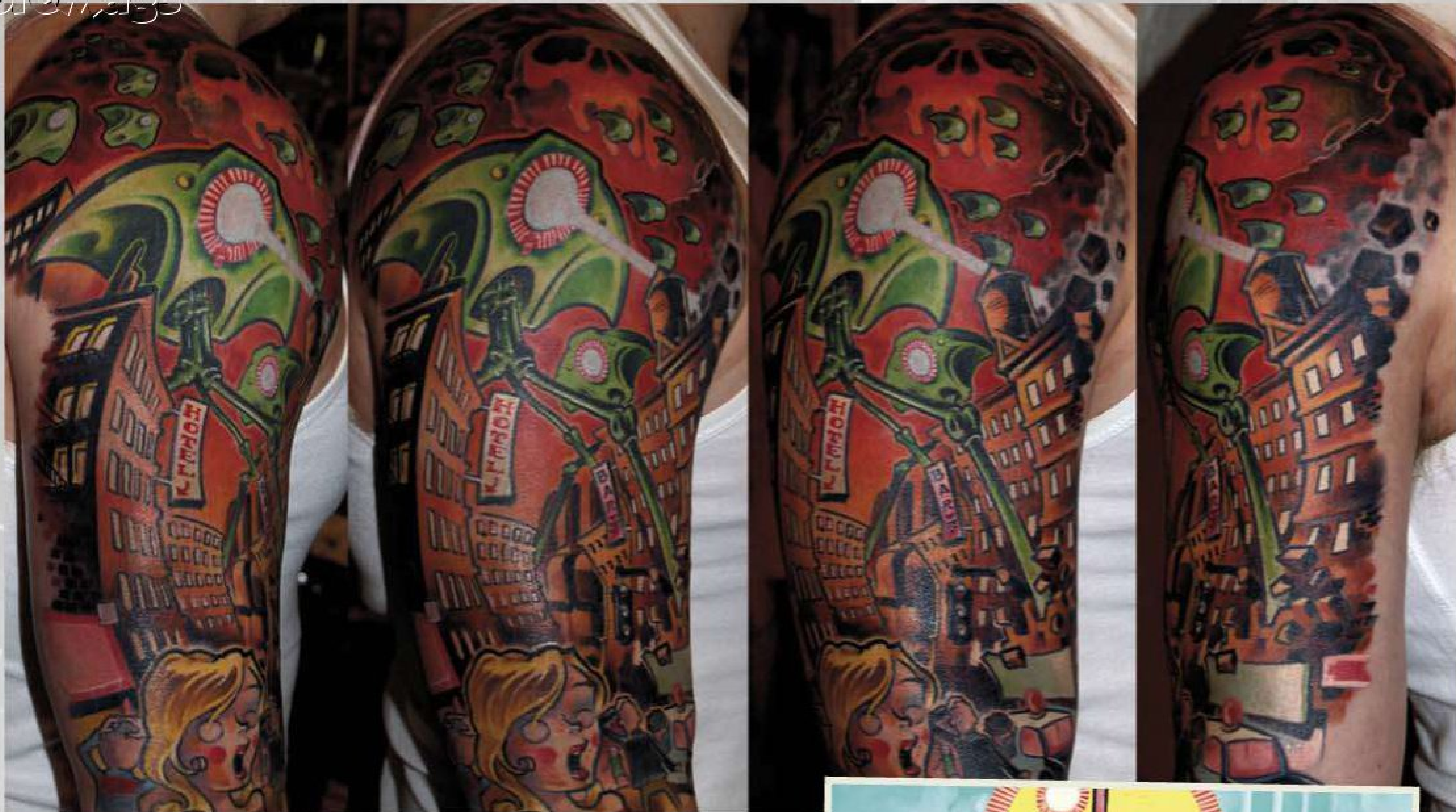
The world of tattoo artist Electric Pick is vast, matchless and colourful. The restless globetrotter is at home anywhere he lays his head and it is hard to say where his homeport really is, but it is certain that he is a creative genius full of unusual ideas, concepts and designs.

Conspiracy Inc.
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www.electricpick.com
electricpick.blogspot.com

The fact that Pick would be an artist some day was engrained into him from birth. Born in the Chinatown area of Paris, the son of a British actress and a French pianist, he undoubtedly received the good artist genes. Pick was two years old when his parents divorced and like many others, they had shared custody. His mother moved to Montreal and his father stayed in Paris, so Pick was shipped from Canada to France and back pretty much every year.





That could go a long way in explaining his urge to constantly travel around the globe. For example, while answering these interview questions, Pick was on a freighter in the middle of nowhere between New York and Copenhagen. Copenhagen is where he spends most of his time as a part of Conspiracy Inc - it's fundamentally became his base - but he spends almost as much time in Hong Kong too. El Pick is something of a globetrotter and fond of taking his skills to far-flung shores, so it's time to find out what he's all about...

TELL US A BIT ABOUT YOUR BACKGROUND, PLEASE. HOW DID IT ALL START?

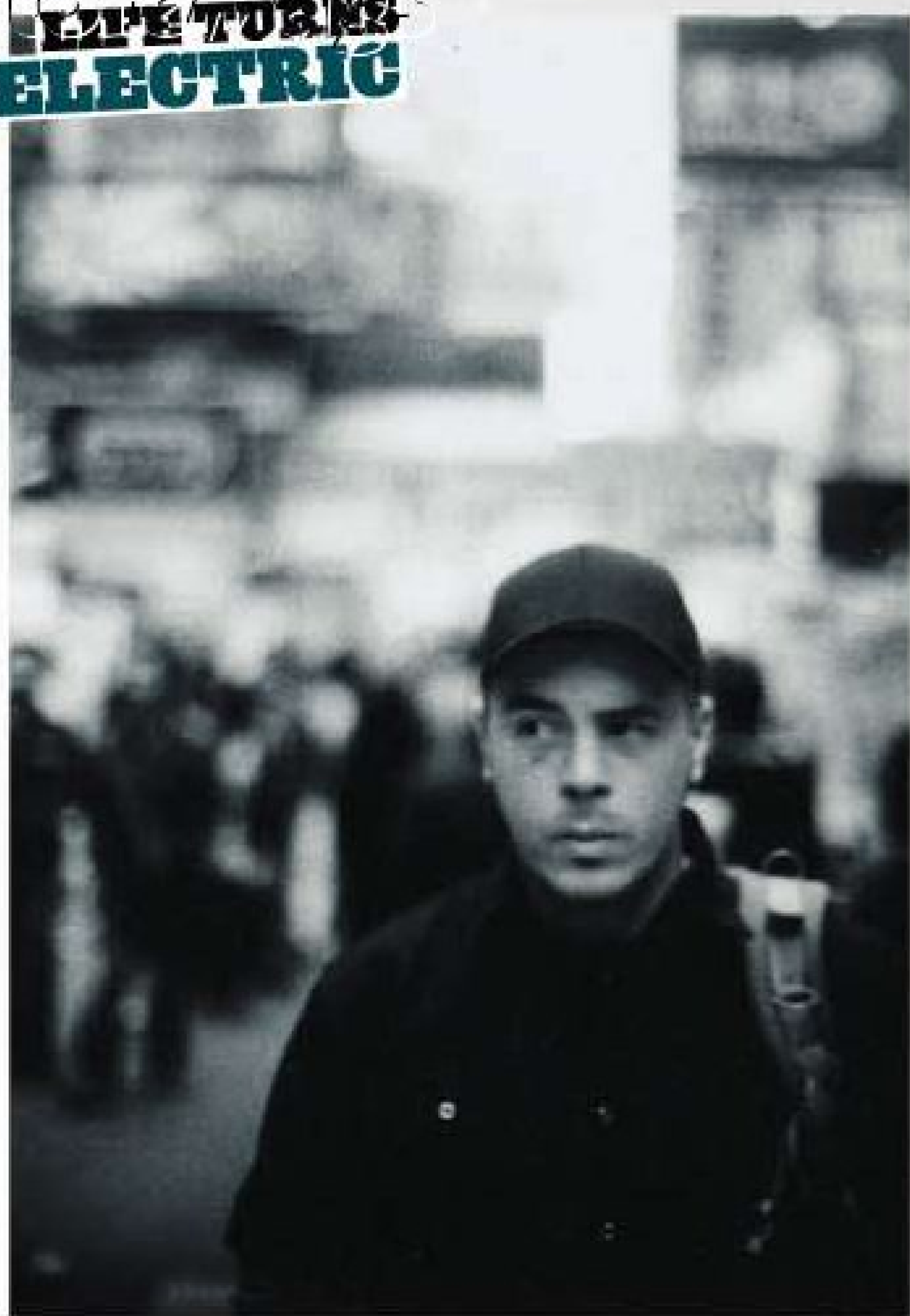
I guess every kid draws when they're

young. Most of them stop one day to get busy with serious shit and I just never stopped. (I've been) taking it seriously... maybe since I was about 12. I remember one fine morning around that age, just deciding I liked it too much to ever stop and that whatever I did in life would have to have something to do with drawing. As for tattooing, I got caught when I was 19, in April 1998. I never thought I would actually tattoo one day and knew nothing about it back then. It was back when I lived in Montreal, Canada. I worked and managed a comic book shop in downtown Montreal, and a North American minimum wage usually barely covers your rent. I was always on the lookout for extra gigs: usually gig posters for local bands or anything I could get my hands on that had anything to do with illustration. One fine day, I heard a rumor that most tattoo shops in town were usually always open to buying new flash for their collection. I remember a friend telling me this and the same night ripping out the 'tattoo shop' pages from a phone booth book. The very next day I was hunting down shops and secretly checking out the work on the walls. I made it home after a full day of investigation and started right away on my very own first set of flash. I remember wanting to do as much as possible and returning a few days later to one of the biggest shops in town with a set of 50 sheets. The owner took a good look at all of them, bought them all (to my happy surprise) and then followed by offering me a job. I didn't know what to say and was always open to try new things so I said "Sure, why not?" I had a one-hour apprenticeship and started work that same day in Montreal's biggest tattoo factory: 6 days a week with 15 other 'tattooers', 3 floors



I HAD A ONE-HOUR APPRENTICESHIP AND STARTED WORK THAT SAME DAY IN MONTREAL'S BIGGEST TATTOO FACTORY: 6 DAYS A WEEK WITH 15 OTHER 'TATTOOERS', 3 FLOORS AND A SHITLOAD OF CRAP.

and a shitload of crap. I worked there for a full summer, making more money than I had ever made in all of my life. After that summer was over (with a lot of trouble), I made it out of that tattoo factory and back to Europe - I missed it too much - and started going on the



PEOPLE WOULD TELL ME THAT IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE FOR ME TO TATTOO MY ORIGINAL WORK ON PEOPLE, THAT NO ONE WOULD GO FOR MY SILLY DOODLES AND THAT TATTOOING HAD TO BE DONE A CERTAIN WAY.

road with my new trade. I hooked up with an old crazy guy called Waldy in Vienna that same year, and as much as I think that guy is crazy, he's the one who forced me to work only freehand and that's where I discovered that tattooing was actually just another medium and that my illustration background could be completely compatible! And that's when I started tattooing only my shit – it wasn't very popular at the time! Lots of people would tell me that it was impossible for me to tattoo my original work on people, that no one would go for my silly doodles and that tattooing had to be done a certain way, that I had to copy the flash and that was the only way. I was and am still very hardheaded so I resisted and well...I guess I proved them wrong in the end.

WHAT MADE YOU WANT TO BECOME AN ARTIST? HOW DID IT TURN OUT THAT YOU FINALLY BECAME ONE?

Well, I guess you just always are an artist. You don't become one. It's just a way to see things and having confidence to show it to others. I don't believe in talent. I think anyone can do anything it all depends on the passion and dedication. But I think some people have stuff to say and others don't, some people choose to say it in words, images



or music, and others don't. I guess I always liked images, and had and still have my own to share.

The big click though was for me from comics. I love comics and still hold on to the dream of one day being able to publish my own and being able to live from it. I just think it's the best medium out there. I consider myself being an illustrator way before being a tattoo artist and since I always drew, and never quit getting illustration gigs. I always kept working on my illustration. I think, as much as tattooing is way more limited of a medium compared to illustration, it still helped shape my work on paper and canvas over the years. I draw the way I draw today a bit because of tattooing and I tattoo the way I do today because of my illustration work.

WHAT DOES INSPIRE YOU?

Inspiration, I think, comes from your personal vision of a dirty mix of everything you see. I could fill a whole book with names of people who have inspired me along the way, from other illustrators to architects, from graphic designers to photographers. It's all just

about colours, shapes and how you see them. I would have to say that the big things that pushed me in my artistic life were underground comics of the '70s (Crumb et al), constructivism, new wave Russian art, industrialisation, Bauhaus etc. I also have two names of artists who have never stopped inspiring me: Ashley Wood, and my personal favourite, Mr. Rockin' Jelly Bean, the god of illustration. I could really name a lot but those have to be the top.

WHAT IS THE MAIN DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DRAWING/ILLUSTRATING AND TATTOOING?

Well, you might get the wrong impression from this and I really don't want you to because I do love tattooing... I would say that the difference between illustration and tattooing is that a canvas doesn't tell you what it wants to get painted on, it's available whenever you want to work on it, it takes in the colour exactly like you apply it, it never moves while you paint on it, it doesn't have a good or bad pain tolerance, it doesn't need to heal, can't be careless and get sunburnt, never cancels appointments, doesn't bleed and force ☺



INSPIRATION, I THINK, COMES FROM YOUR PERSONAL VISION OF A DIRTY MIX OF EVERYTHING YOU SEE.



WHO IS ROCKIN' JELLY BEAN?

The God of Illustration? Damn right. Based in Japan, Rockin' Jelly Bean is known for sporting Mexican wrestling masks at public appearances and having a girl or two by his side. Along with his illustrations, RJB also creates vinyl toy and t-shirt designs. His art can be found on fliers, posters, magazine and album covers throughout Japan. Over here at Skin Deep - we love the guy - gotta love that sixties-style assault on the senses!





TRAVELLING IS ONE OF THE ONLY TRUE THINGS I KNOW IN LIFE: GETTING LOST IN FAR-AWAY PLACES, SEEING HOW DIFFERENT PEOPLE LIVE, THINK AND ACT ACROSS OUR LITTLE PLANET, AND SEEING WHAT PEOPLE ACROSS THE WORLD HAVE COME UP WITH AND BUILT.

you to be very clean and aware of the basics of cross-contamination and your environment! However, a canvas does not always help you pay the bills in time and is not permanently part of someone's physical life for as long as their actual life. It's a very interesting medium to say the least and I love it! However, it is very limited artistically and that's why I plan to, not stop tattooing completely, but slow down and eventually stop doing it commercially in the next few years.

YOU ARE TRAVELLING RESTLESSLY AROUND THE WORLD. WHAT IS THE GREAT THING ABOUT THAT?

Travelling is one of the only true things I know in life: getting lost in far-away places, seeing how different people live, think and act across our little planet, and seeing what people across the world have come up with and built. I love cities; I always grew up in them and loved to see them all.

The stuff that you see around you instantly gets processed in your head, becomes the way you are and see things changes the way you paint and draw. It gives you new ideas immediately, but it also changes you forever and becomes a new filter for all your other images to go through and it just makes your work much more mature over time. Yes, it's all about the art for me. I know, I'm obsessed!

IS THERE A PLACE YOU CALL HOME, WHERE YOU LIKE IT BEST?

Right now and for the last almost 3 years, it's been Copenhagen. There's



good and bad everywhere and Copenhagen has its fair share of both. I guess I've stayed here in Denmark so long more because of the friends I've made here more than the actual town. I still try to travel around as much as I can but for the last 3 years I've always come back to Copenhagen as my base. But I won't be here forever! No official plans yet but you can bet I'll be on the move again in a few years for a new home. ★



Sean Dowdell Designed Micro Dermal Anchor

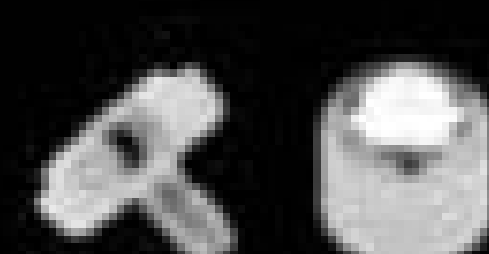
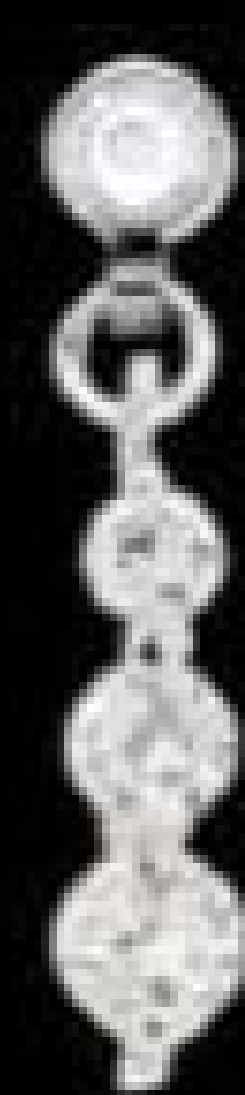


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WORDS: PAULA HARDY KANGELOS
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John Anderton is a man well beyond his 26 years in terms of being a great artist – and he's making some waves within the community that we couldn't ignore...

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Starting from the very beginning, what drew you to tattoos? What was it about them that you liked? What is your earliest tattoo memory?

What I like about tattoos is that they are totally awesome! My earliest memory is my friend's brother coming home from the army on leave and him going straight to the local studio to spend his wage. He got started filling his arms and got loads of

tattoos all in a short space of time. It was all just flash but we thought it looked cool as fuck. By the time we were 16 we had saved enough money to get some tattoos of our own. I remember going into the shop and just going "Errrrrm... that one" (that not so well thought out first tattoo is currently in the process being lazered off.) I did get other tattoos from the same studio, mainly because it was the

closest studio but also because I didn't know the tattoos I was getting were not that good, instead I did the same as lot of other people do and thought, "Its good... for a tattoo" which now annoys me as the "for a tattoo" part is rubbish. There are hundreds if not thousands of tattoo artists creating images on the skin that could easily be mistaken for a photograph.

After that first, bad tattoo did you get more from the same place or did you try other shops? How and when did you realize that the work you were



getting wasn't of the best standard?

After those first tattoos I had more in a few different studios until I had some really bad ones from which scared me off getting tattooed for a while. I remember wondering how to tell which tattooists are good and which are bad, I didn't realise you could research artists and that people did actually travel to get decent work, but it wasn't until I started tattooing that I discovered just how bad my own tattoos were.

What made you want to be a tattooer? How did you get started and what

helped or hindered you during those early days?

After getting a few of these old tattoos sorted out (covered or reworked) I figured "I could do that," I just knew that I could do better than the early tattoo work I had collected. I am ashamed to say I started tattooing from home and that definitely hindered me. I don't doubt that I would have gotten a lot better a lot quicker if I had a proper apprenticeship. Luckily, at this time, I was friends with Lee Carter (owner of The Tattoo Jungle in Catterick) and it was Lee who was covering up my own

I REMEMBER WONDERING HOW TO TELL WHICH TATTOOISTS ARE GOOD AND WHICH ARE BAD, I DIDN'T REALISE YOU COULD RESEARCH ARTISTS AND THAT PEOPLE DID ACTUALLY TRAVEL TO GET DECENT WORK, BUT IT WASN'T UNTIL I STARTED TATTOOING THAT I DISCOVERED JUST HOW BAD MY OWN TATTOOS WERE.

bad tattoos. When Lee discovered that I had bought a machine, he definitely disapproved, "No... why have you got tattoo stuff? You will damage your friend's skin and they will all get diseases and their arms will fall off" but when I showed him my first attempt (a nautical star on my own leg) he paused and said, "Hmmm... that's your first go?"

After that he watched me progress a bit and about a month later, he offered me a job tattooing on the weekends. I was very lucky that a few bad tattoos turned me onto my career path. ☺



I AM FORTUNATE THAT I HAVE LOTS OF GREAT CUSTOMERS WHO HONOUR ME WITH THEIR TRUST SO I GET TO DO THE KIND OF TATTOOS THAT I WANT TO DO.

Who or what are your influences? Tattoos, art, books films, music?

My main influence in tattooing is Bez (Triple Six Studios, Sunderland) I used to look at his work and think "that is the best tattoo I've ever seen, I wish I could do that..." I would then start to improve and find myself thinking that I was finally starting to catch up to him and then I would see a new piece and just think fuuuck...

Yes I'm progressing but he is progressing twice as fast.

I also love the work of Mike DeVries and Nikko Hurtado and they are both influential in my approach to colour realism. Similarly, I would look to Bob

Tyrrell and Paul Naylor for inspiration for a black and grey piece. I tend to take inspiration from people who are awesome at whatever style I am working in at the time and approach the piece thinking to myself, "How would they do it?"

Some artists like to work with clients that have a clear vision, some prefer lots of freedom, how do work best; do you have a favourite kind of customer?

My favourite type of customers are the people who come in with a cool idea and just say do whatever you want with it, that way we can bounce ideas off each other and this really helps us both to come up with an awesome tattoo.

That kind of freedom definitely makes for better tattoos than when someone has very definite ideas, from the design to the application to the ink. I don't really enjoy working that way.

I am fortunate that I have lots of great customers who honour me with their trust so I get to do the kind of tattoos that I want to do.

Of the tattoos you've made so far, which are your favourites?

Of the tattoos I've done so far, my favourites are a portrait of Gene Simmons that I did while working in Norway and the one I did today, a colour portrait of a young girl with brown hair.



I WORK ON IMPROVING ALL THE TIME AND I PUSH MYSELF BY ANALYZING PHOTOS OF MY TATTOOS, I SEARCH FOR ALL THE IMPERFECTIONS AND FOCUS ON THEM.

How do you push yourself, what steps do you take to improve your work?

I work on improving all the time and I push myself by analyzing photos of my tattoos, I search for all the imperfections and focus on them. That way the next time I do a tattoo in the same style I am really aware of where things can go wrong so I don't make the same mistakes again.

How important is traveling (and working at conventions) to your ongoing tattoo art practice?

I think it is really important to travel because you get to see how different people work and how they run their

studios and compare that to your own, it also builds confidence, especially when you have to talk through a tattoo and the tattooing process with someone who speaks little or no English. After working in Norway a few times I've even started to learn Norwegian to make it easier for me! As well as travelling, I often work conventions as they are important for getting your name out there and showing people what you can do, otherwise how will they know you even exist? You can advertise on social network sites but there is nothing like seeing the work in the flesh. Conventions have also helped me

improve my tattooing because again you get to see how other tattoo artists work, I've learnt a lot by watching others tattoo.

Do you see your future self having large-scale coverage? Are the tattoos you have yourself different to the ones you make?

The style of tattoos I would prefer to wear myself would be bright new school colour (In a few weeks time I'm getting tattooed by Mat Lapping) and the style I currently prefer to tattoo in is a more realistic one but I've only been tattooing for three years so this could quite easily change in the future.☺



I SEE TATTOOING JUST GETTING BIGGER AND BETTER UNTIL THERE ARE SO MANY GOOD ARTISTS THAT THE BAD TATTOOISTS WON'T GET ANY WORK. THE INDUSTRY WILL SELF CLEANSE, IN A WAY, THE TALENT WILL JUST KEEP RISING TO THE TOP.



I definitely see myself as a tattoo collector as well as a tattoo artist. I love the look of large-scale coverage and the only part of me that I don't plan to tattoo is my face.

Where do you see tattooing going in the future? What do you hope to achieve personally?

In the future, I see tattooing just getting bigger and better until there are so many good artists that the bad tattooists won't get any work. The industry will self cleanse, in a way, the talent will just keep rising to the top. At least, that's what I would like to happen.

Finally, Who are your tattoo heroes?

My biggest hero and the person that I need to thank the most is my fiancée, Sam. She has helped me so much with my career so far, I am so lucky to have her full support in everything I do, she is my best friend and I literally wouldn't be where I am now without her. I also need to thank Lee Carter for giving me that first chance, letting me work in his shop and getting me into the industry properly and Martin Robson for giving me a job when I thought I was going to have to quit tattooing after The Tattoo Jungle closed. Especially as he didn't even have enough work for himself. ★

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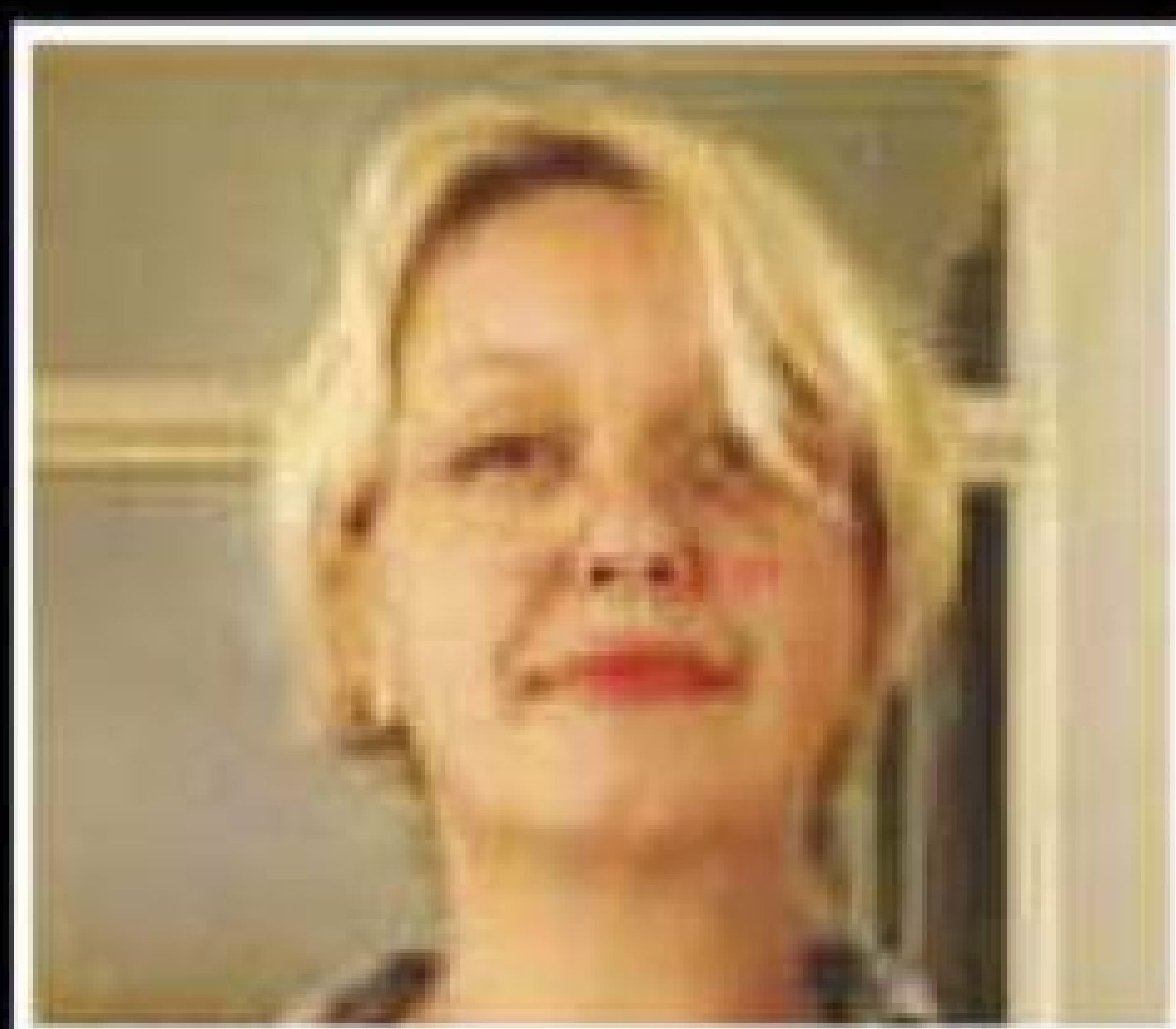
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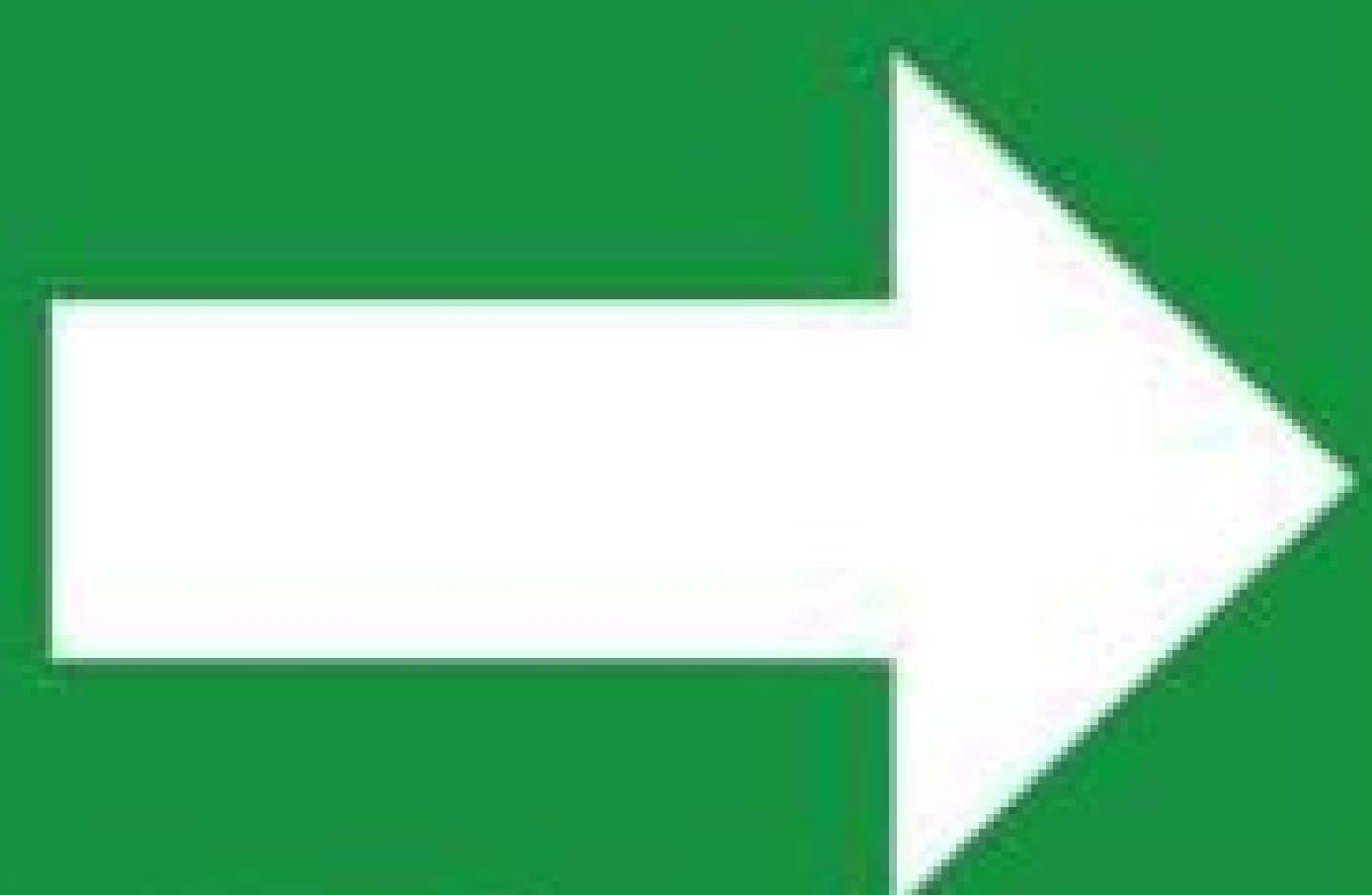
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ON THE ROAD

LAS VEGAS



TATTOO CONVENTION

We heard it calling from afar, but who would draw the straw that took them to the Holy Land? Who could handle the blistering heat and cope with excess all areas in the land of slot machines, Elvis and er, lobsters? When it came to the crunch, we simply sent out the big (Flaming) Guns:

The Las Vegas Tattoo Convention was held in the Mandalay Bay - a towering Gold casino/hotel behemoth at the top of the Vegas strip, with approximately 6000 rooms! The convention was a little hard to find, all the directions led us round the casinos and finally past the eleven acre tropical white sandy beach that was situated at the heart of the hotel, to the 'biggest tattoo show on earth' presented by Mario Barth, also the owner of 'King Ink' in the Mirage hotel and 'Starlight Tattoo' in Mandalay Bay hotel.

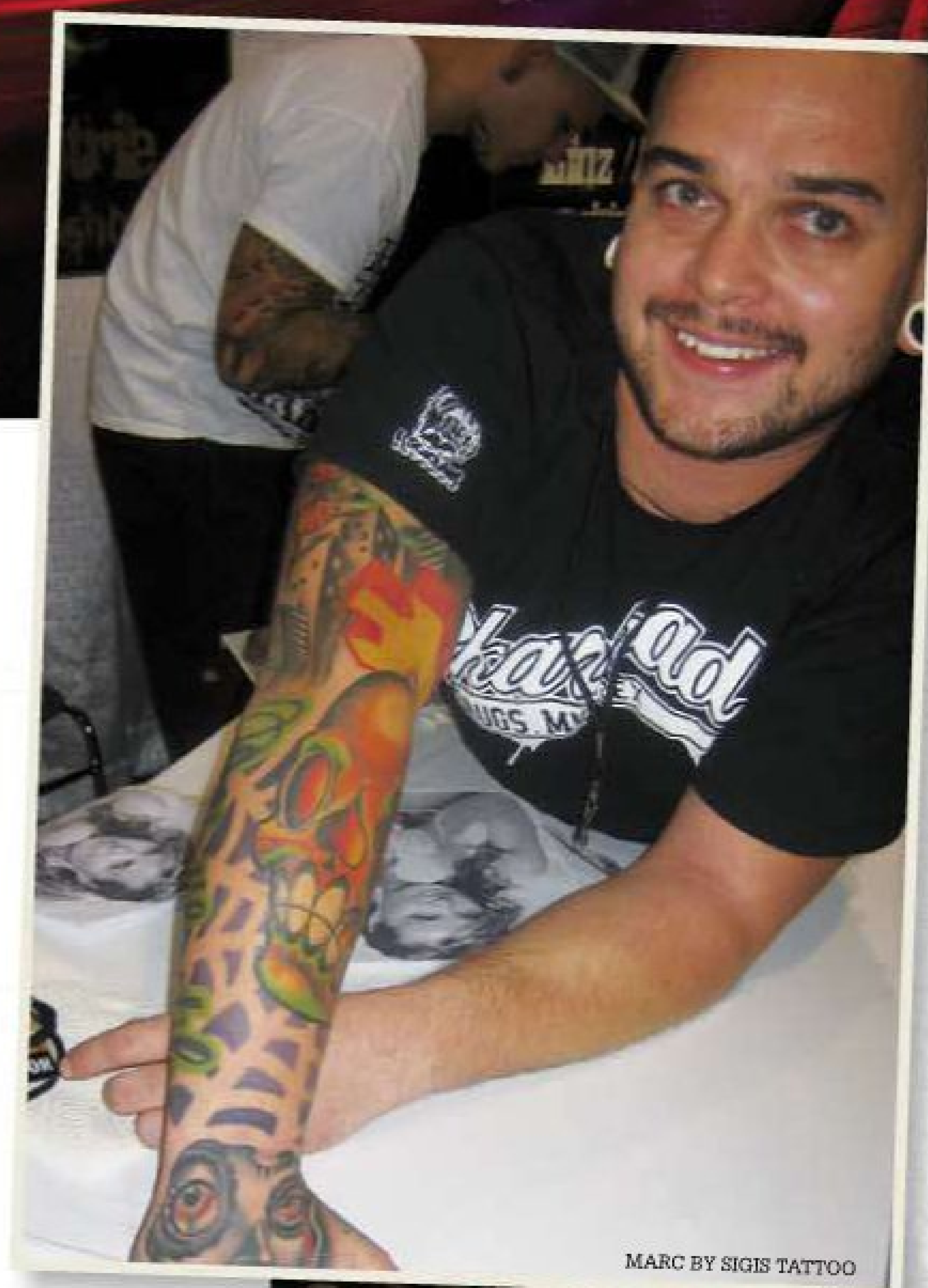
As we walked through the beautifully carved doors into the 'show' it was very quiet - no music, entertainment or even a carpet, it was like a warehouse and the show barely covered half the available floor space - it later took about

an hour for most of the tattooists to arrive once the doors had opened, but it was a friendly show, we managed to find some English locals in the shape of

Marc and Tanya from Skin Sorcerer in Maldon and after a natter and a picture we went off to find some Vegas locals!

There was a good amount of art with a Mexican influence here including Rob from 'Sugar skull art' who started making these beautiful skulls from sugar when his mother unfortunately passed away - the largest one was approximately 35 pounds of sugar! We also found 'Calavera' from Venice beach with their quirky colourful ceramic skulls.

We couldn't help but notice 'Da Van' and his biggest tattoo machine in the world! A quiet guy with a big gun! It



MARC BY SIGIS TATTOO





JENNIFER JARRETT BY JESSIE SMITH



CHRISTINA BY TROY AT RRR TATTOO



RHIANNA BY MATTHEW KILEY



CHRISTINA BY TROY AT RRR TATTOO



GEORGE MAVRIDIS, TATTOOLIGANS

was so noisy, a true jack-hammer when running! I only just managed to handle the smaller machine.

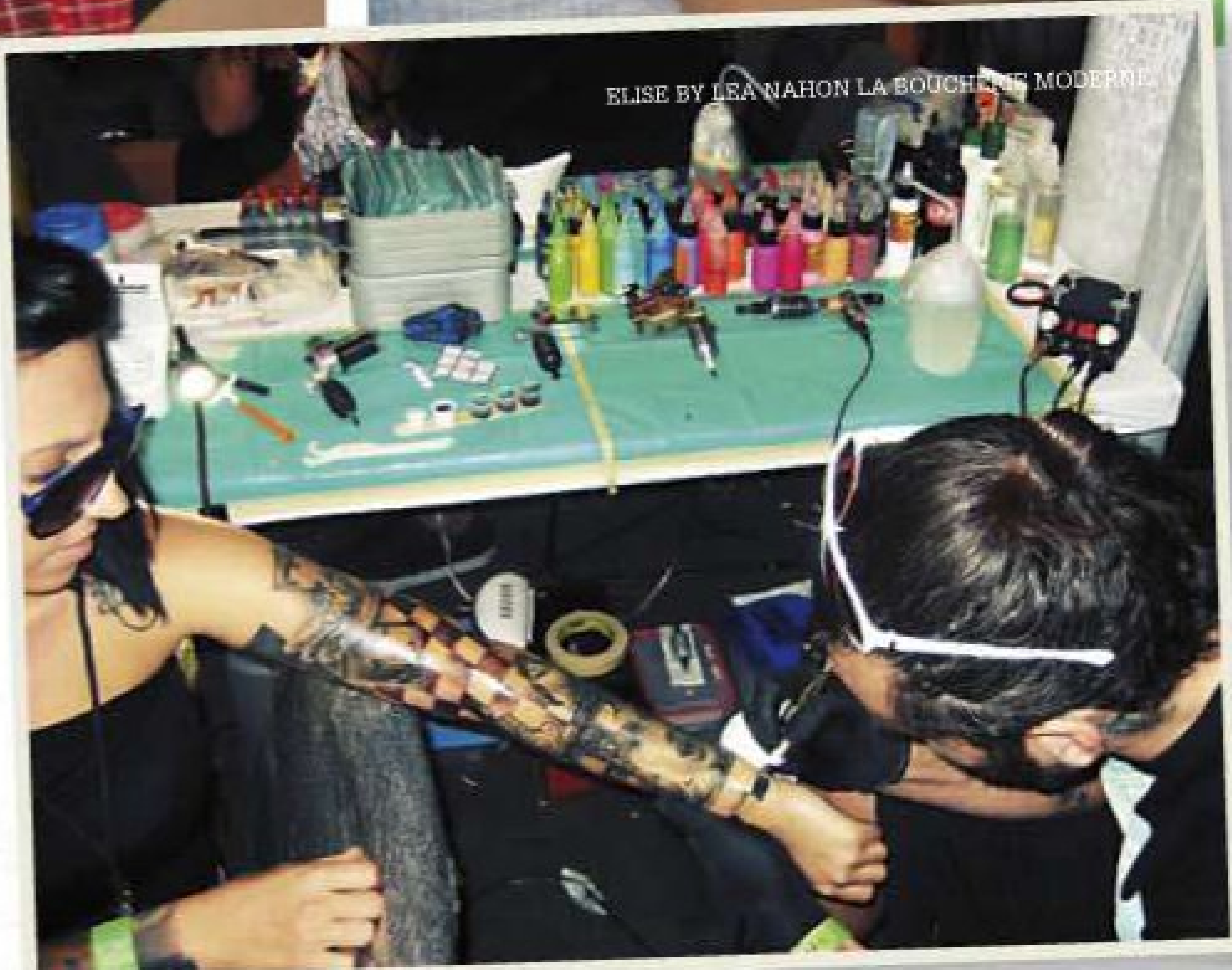
The pinnacle of the show for us was meeting 'Crazy Philadelphia Eddie' what a loveable rogue – he had a voice like he's been gargling concrete, he was selling his book, which he signed for me, I also got a pat on the bum and called 'toots'...

And from that I bumped into Mario Barth himself! He looked a little stressed, not really surprising considering the amount of work that must go into running these events and the evidence of a recession was very visible in and around Vegas. But he was a gentleman

and gave us the time for a snap and wished us a good trip.

Wandering around there were a good selection of traditional hand pushed tattooists working hard, we spotted a trophy of best of day on the Friday, the winner was Kirstexn Chjrco from 'One Flesh' who tattooed a lighthouse on a gentleman called Tony's ribs.

Christina had some beautiful work by Troy from RRR tattoo in California, Sporting had a tiger leg sleeve and a phoenix on her head, Christina decided on getting her head tattooed when she lost her hair while battling cancer, she has fully recovered and proudly shows her tattoo and achievements of survival. ➡



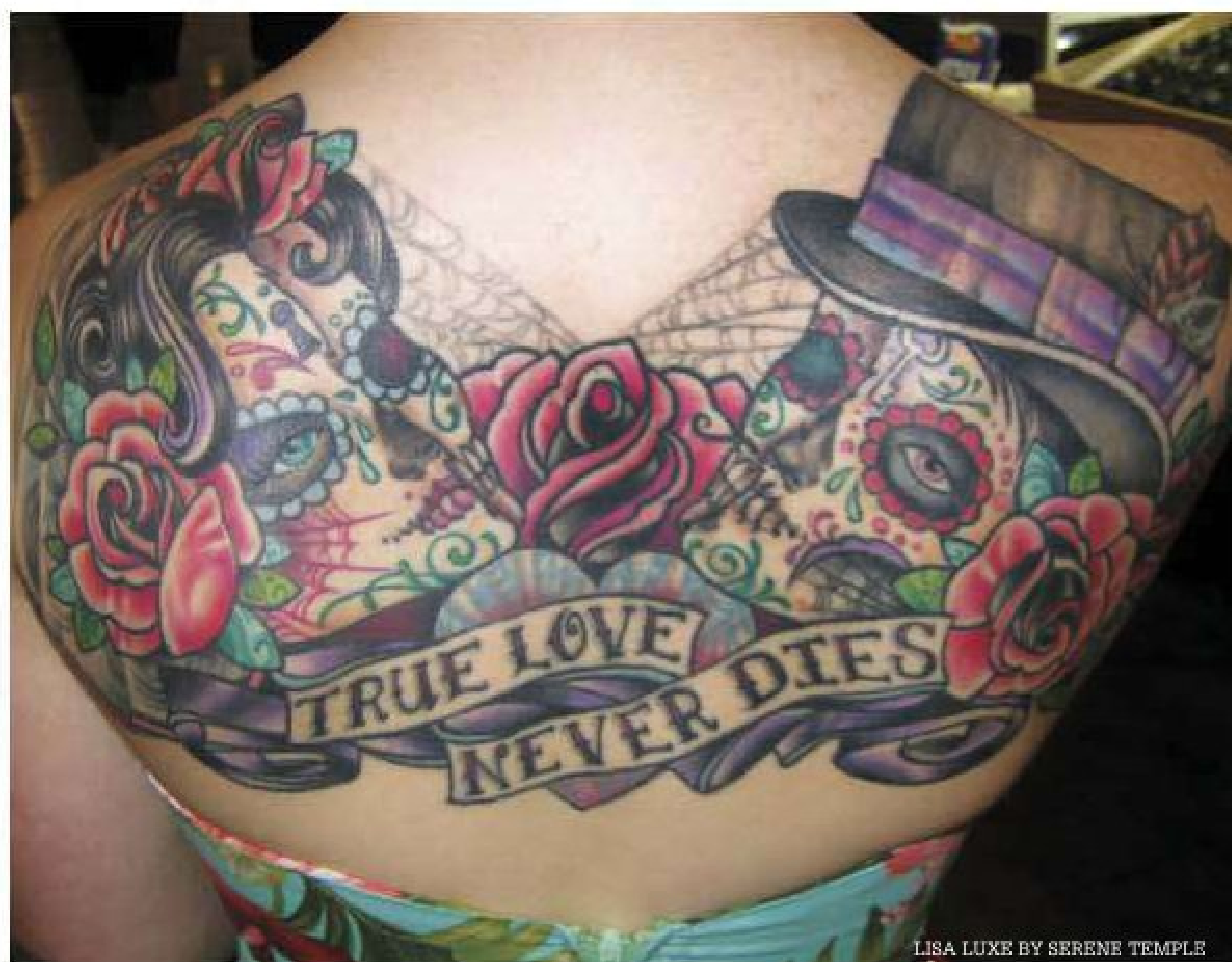
ELISE BY LEA NAHON LA BOUCHE, LE MODERNE



SERENITY BY TONY LEOPARD INK



TONY BY KIRSTEN CHJRCO FROMONE FLESH, BEST OF FRIDAY TROPHY WINNER



LISA LUXE BY SERENE TEMPLE



DA VAN AND HIS BIGGEST TATTOO MACHINE IN THE WORLD



We were also fortunate enough to meet Jennifer and David Jarrett, a married couple who are both covered in some breath taking ink from Jesse Smith in Virginia "He started it!" was Jennifer's statement on how they decided to go for such an extensive coverage of tattoos.

Overall the tattoo show had a wonderful selection of art and sculpture, and we met some great tattoo collectors

and tattooists, putting the show on was brave of Mario Barth with the recession hitting that part of America so hard. It wasn't the biggest tattoo show on earth, but it was a friendly one.

Special thanks to Julie and Kai from Flaming Gun in Colchester for taking the time out to cover the show for us. Not quite a dirty job that somebody had to do by the sounds of it... ★





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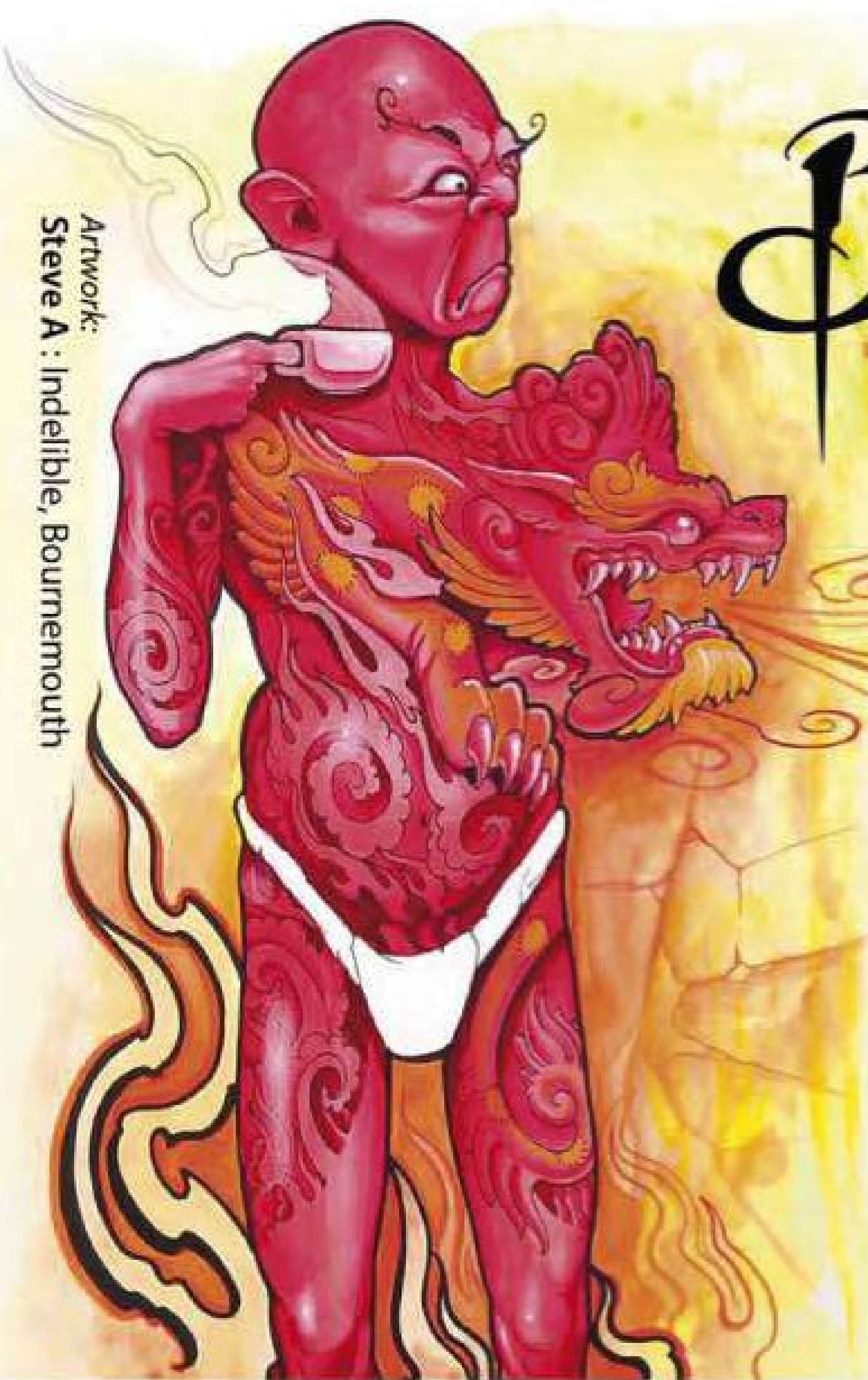
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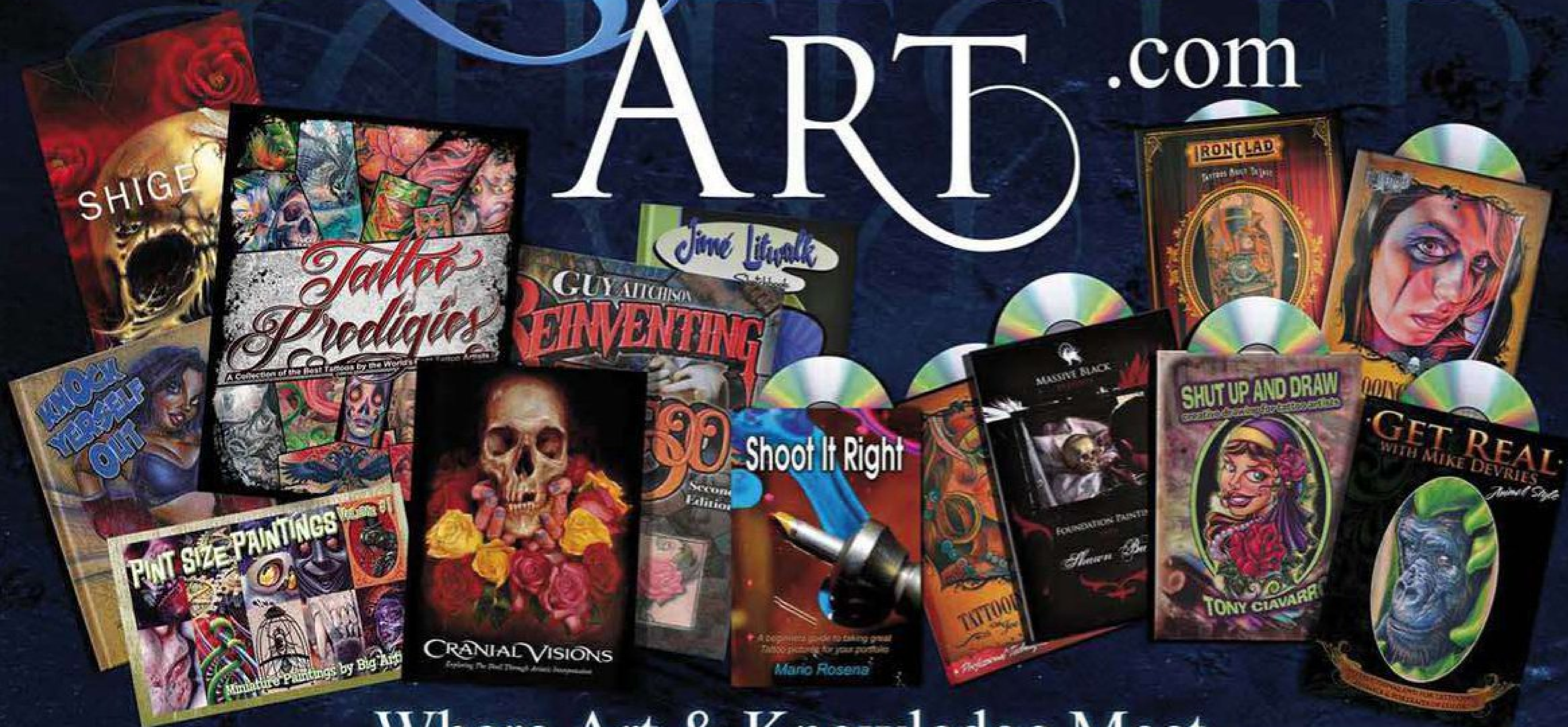
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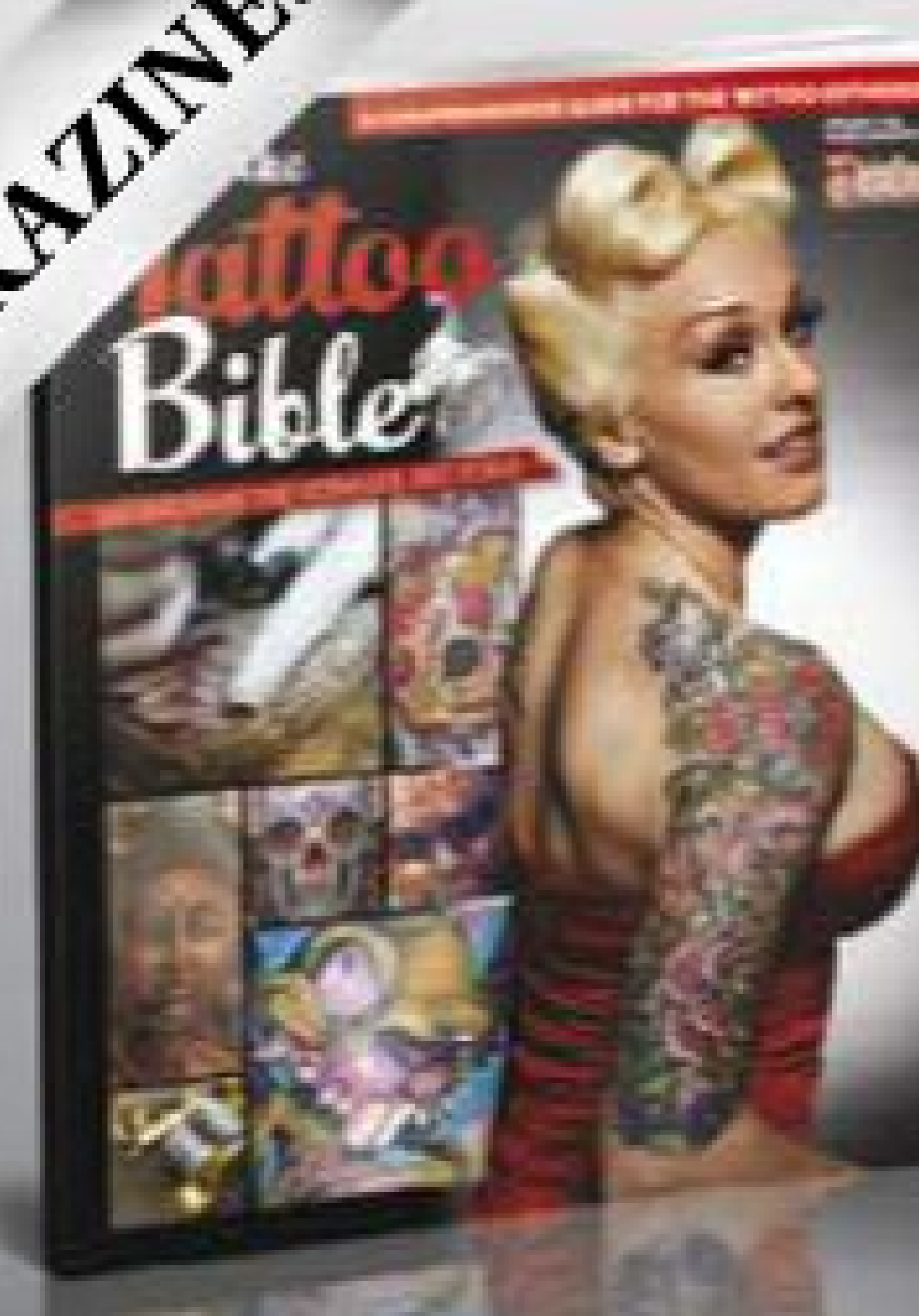
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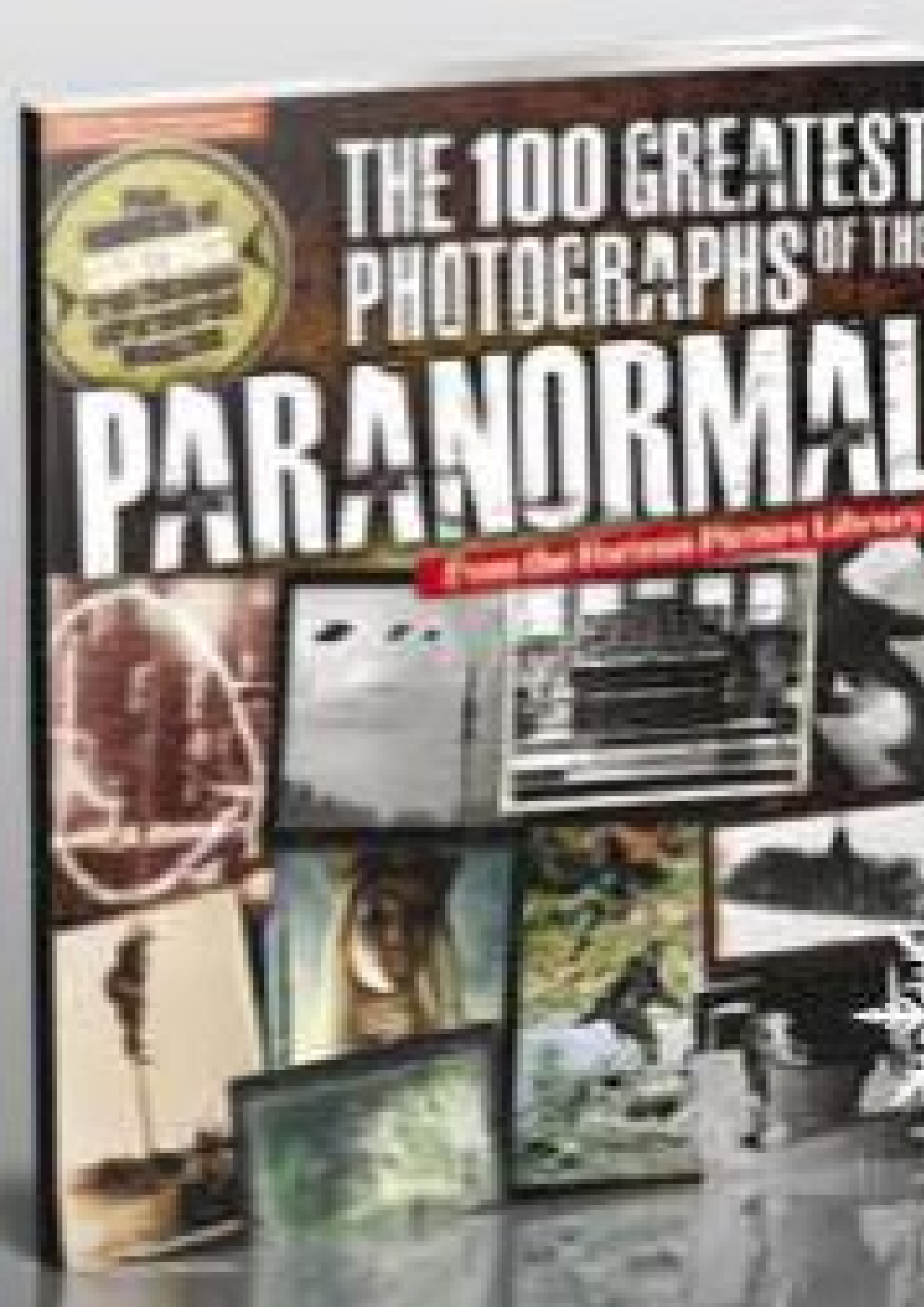
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IN AT THE DEEP END

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DIANA VREELAND

In the last two decades the number of people willing to modify their bodies through tattooing has sharply risen, both in number and in visibility. Tattoo imagery is seen everywhere, from couture fashion to coffee mugs.



Paula Hardy Kangelos

Some have dismissed this enormous popularity as fashion whimsy, a mere trend that will be sorely regretted when the sea of style changes. But the variety of the people bitten by the tattooing bug is immense. It's no longer a sub cultural practice, but rather an art of the people. Of course, this popularity means that the aesthetics of tattooing have been hijacked, Jean Paul Gaultier has been working with tattoo iconography for years and the current Chanel advertising campaign features models that appear to have been tattooed with the fashion house's logo, you can even buy these temporary tattoos for yourself.

Tattoo imagery utilized outside of tattooing can feel problematic, enthusiasts and artists know that dermal art clearly cannot be compared to hot pants or an asymmetrical haircut but despite many differences fashion and tattooing do share common ground.

On the surface tattooing is very much like fashion, it is, after all, a set of signs and codes for the like-minded viewer to assimilate and digest. A tattoo fan may well recognise the work of a respected tattooist in much the same way that a high fashion fanatic will identify a pair of Prada loafers.

But adorning our bodies is opposites in action; it allows us to assert our difference and to illustrate our individuality, in the same way that school children modify their uniforms, tattoo fans alter our skins. We do it to stand up and state that we are no like everyone else. But tattoos are not just about individuality; they also allow us to demonstrate our sense of belonging to an alternative culture.

Humans wear clothes to satisfy our basic needs, protection, comfort and hygiene. But clothing can also aid our emotional needs, communication, expression and identification and tattoos can operate similarly.

By wearing high heels, or choosing a hairstyle that partially obscures our vision, we choose form over

function. The need for expression outweighs practicality. We even like to reappropriate the functional, turning jeans and other work trousers into fashion choices.

But adornment and fashion are not the same thing. Fashion's very nature is to be ever changing, it's a race to possess the next big thing. The signs displayed in fashion are arbitrary and here is the essential difference, tattoos can have personal meaning and can be full of emotional content, yet everything in fashion signifies the same things - I am fashionable, I am current, up to the minute and constantly evolving, I am not static, I am going somewhere.

So how can anything permanent be seen as fashion? Fashion is a tool used by the upwardly mobile to track their movement through time and social status. Perhaps being a tattooed person indicates a stubborn opposition, an attempt to resist the change. To be tattooed is to be happy with yourself, to be responsible for your choices. According to a book on fashion published more than three decades ago, people with tattoos are those that, "Feel an exceptional need to preserve their individual and social identities and to advertise, if only privately, the would-be permanence of their allegiances, values and beliefs".

This is a fancy way to state a very old idea, that tattoos are just for certain groups, the armed forces, incarcerated felons and ladies of the night. It's true that these people could well feel an exceptional need to preserve their individual identities, but so could many other people. The rise in the popularity of tattooing over the last decade (not just in small tattoos but in the number of people choosing to become heavily tattooed) could be seen as a symptom of an increase in the number of people who feel a desire to demonstrate their individuality. As all high streets become increasingly alike and celebrities look more and more similar, being tattooed could provide not just a way to be different, but also a way of opting out of

the fashion merry go round. What was once haute couture (made to measure, one off pieces created for certain person) has descended to a brand name culture. Is tattooing the new bespoke? There is no denying the appeal of the custom tattoo.

Other forms of body modification are also on the rise, dieting, rigorous exercise programs, cosmetic dentistry and plastic surgery. But all these modifications serve to make us look more alike, they tell us to aspire to an ideal, to be the perfect normal.

Celebrities have become increasingly homogenous as they succumb to the idea of false beauty. Tattoos have not been immune, some smaller, generic tattoos, like stars, or Cheryl Cole inspired hand tattoos have been subsumed by fashion, perhaps precisely because their mass-produced nature leaves little trace of the individual.

A more extreme example of tattooing can be seen in male celebrities, boy band stars Robbie Williams and Shane Lynch display enough coverage to be considered heavily tattooed, an image at odds with the clean cut, standardised boy next door look for which they were previously known. David Beckham, perhaps the best-known footballer in the world, often appears in mainstream media articles about tattoos. It cannot be a coincidence that a man whose primary role is that of a team member feels the need to assert his difference.

Tattooed people choose to provide themselves with a coherent self-identity, a self that is disembodied from the roller coasters of fashion and fame. We need not worry if others wear tattooed printed tights but instead can be content knowing that with our collections of permanent art we can consider ourselves outside of the shallow concerns of fashion, we need not fear getting old. We will always be beautiful.

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